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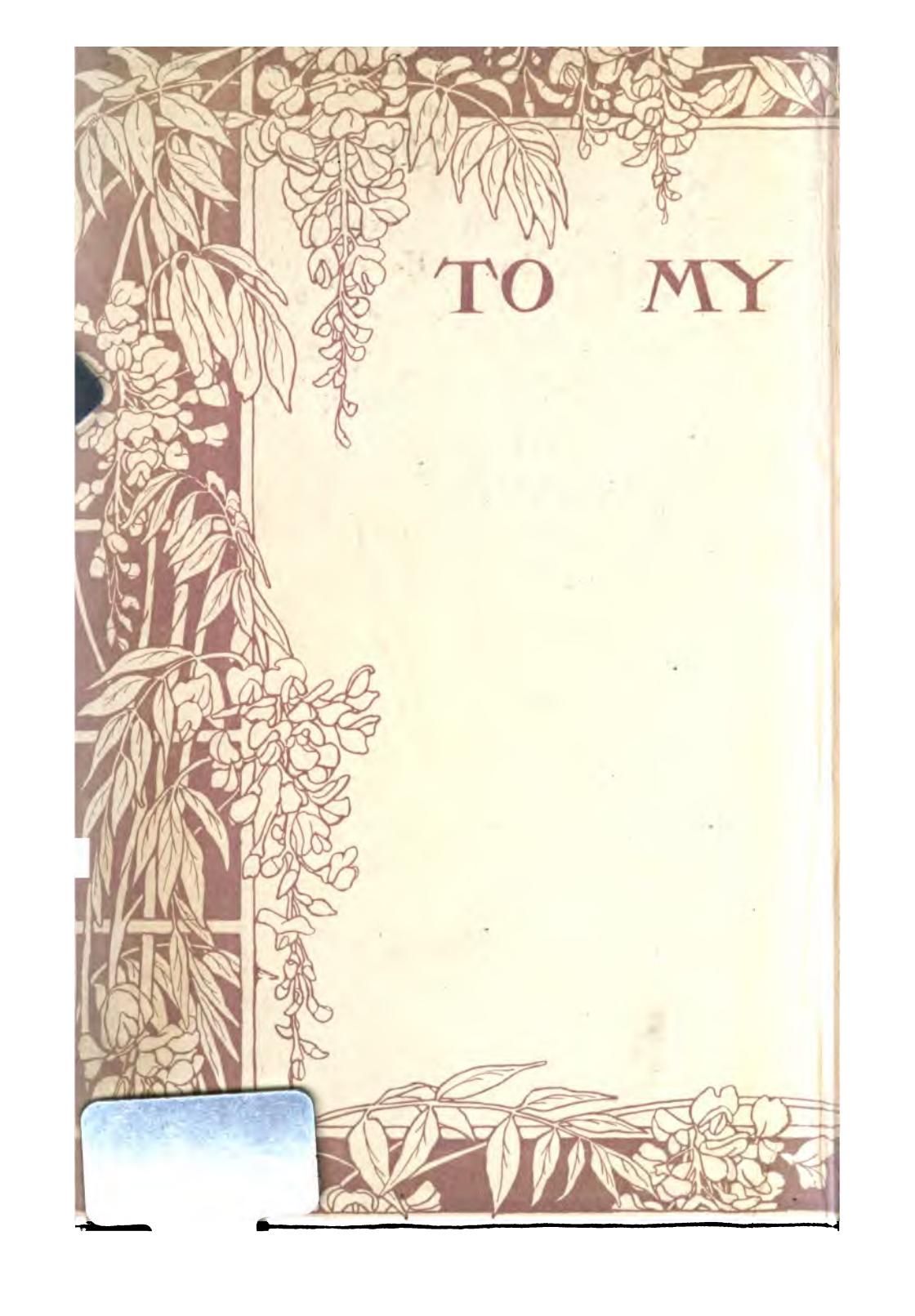
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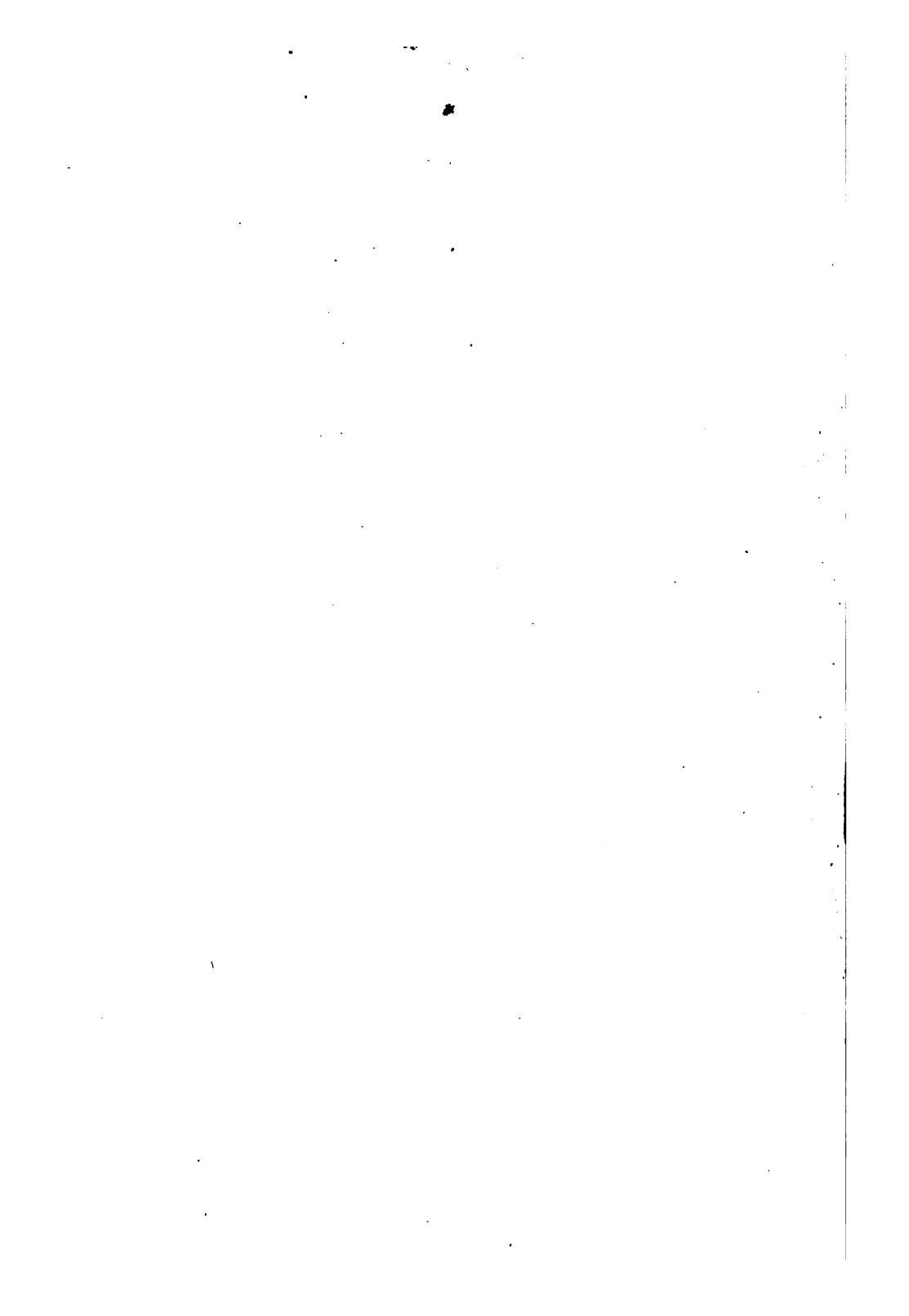
TO MY BELOVED
THE HEART LETTERS
OF A WOMAN



TO MY

BELOVED

To
NCW



TO MY BELOVED

W. T. WILSON
5/2/19



TO MY BELOVED

THE HEART LETTERS O F A W O M A N

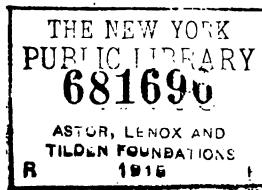
"Loud I call to you, my Love.
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my Love!"

"This gentle call is for you, my Love, for you!"
(Whitman)

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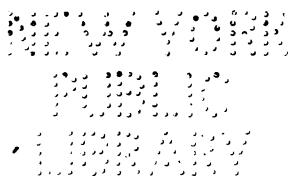
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NOV 19 1914
OLIVER
WARWICK

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TO
ALL THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND:—

“This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend.”
(Song of Solomon)

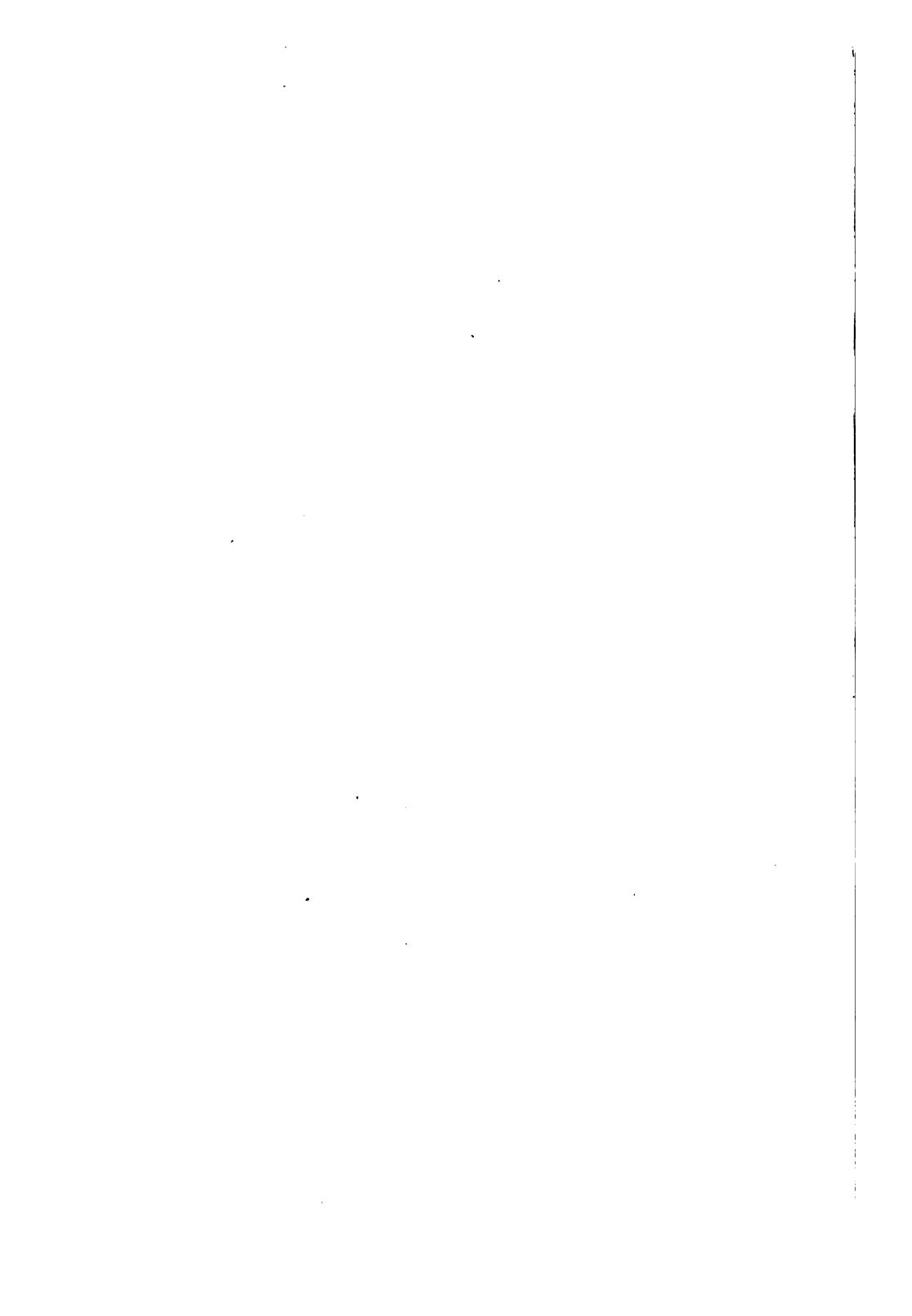


МНОГО
ВЕЧНО
СЛУЖИ
ЧИСЛЫ

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS faithful record of a great love is now being given to the public, because the author, in all humility, imagines it may perhaps help other lovers who have had to face the same problem. Great love almost invariably means great sorrow; therefore as the book is only meant for those who "understand," the author makes no apology for the note of sadness that so often recurs in these pages. "To love is not a game, it is a divine martyrdom."

To My Beloved



To My Beloved

I



HE trees round our new home are beautiful. We are completely shut away from both sight and sound of our neighbours in a graceful, dim, green world of our own. Beyond is a glimpse of fields, and the distant chimney-pots of F — seem so far away that it is difficult to believe we are but a few miles from Piccadilly Circus.

There are oaks and elms of quite grand dimensions and advanced years,

To My Beloved

handsome chestnuts, and copper beeches to make the heart leap. But best I love the group of firs — most mysterious of all trees — that lies to the right of the house. One of my bedroom windows gives a glimpse of the little pathway through it, terminating in a group of delicate silver birches. When the sunlight shines through their leaves along the pathway, divinely contrasting with the dark sentinel pines on either side — you cannot know how joyous life appears!

Then on the left hand boundary of the estate is a long line of poplars. Do poplars mean anything to you? To me they are each a romance. Their delicate straight branches, pointing upwards, seem full of the promise of adventure.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

I walk along the lawn at midnight sometimes, just to see them towering against the sky, and then I think of you, and it seems to me that a world that holds you and the trees is too good to bear the joy of alone.

And then I want you to be there with me on the grass, in the night, looking at the poplars — your long cool fingers suddenly clasping mine with that strange touch that makes me feel so mysteriously glad, so completely fulfilled.

Your hands seem to protect me. As our fingers clasp, the perpetual sense of struggling dies away. I feel quietly victorious — very quietly. As I stand holding your hand, I seem to think of a journey's end, of a harbour after long voyaging.

Yet my feeling for you is the wildest

To My Beloved

unrest. With loved men generally, a woman's most familiar feeling is the desire to put her head upon a kind, strong shoulder. With you I never think of rest or peace, or desire to be petted. I want just to stand quietly, holding your life-giving hands, looking into your mystic eyes — your wonderful calm steady glance flowing over me like healing streams. Your touch, your look, both are so cold, yet they recall only fire at white heat.

And as we stand with linked fingers and eyes enchain'd, long minutes pass, perhaps hours, and still my eyes and hands are hungry. We do not speak and it is all so quiet, so still. One thinks of the thick gloom of the cypress, of the silence of an enchanted forest, and then

The Heart Letters of a Woman

suddenly one thinks of being slowly
frozen to death in hell.

Thus we stand beneath the poplars,
in the night.

Then there is my wonderful cedar.
He lives alone on a distant lawn, huge,
dark, superb, a very emperor among
trees. I always think of him as a live
masculine creature, centuries old, with
an austere soul. Sometimes in my soli-
tary walks at night I bow respectfully
to him. How I would love to know
his secret and what he is thinking of
all alone in his majesty! The children
never play on this lawn; it does not
seem to appeal to them, and I seldom
take visitors there, I love the cedar too
much to share him promiscuously.

To My Beloved

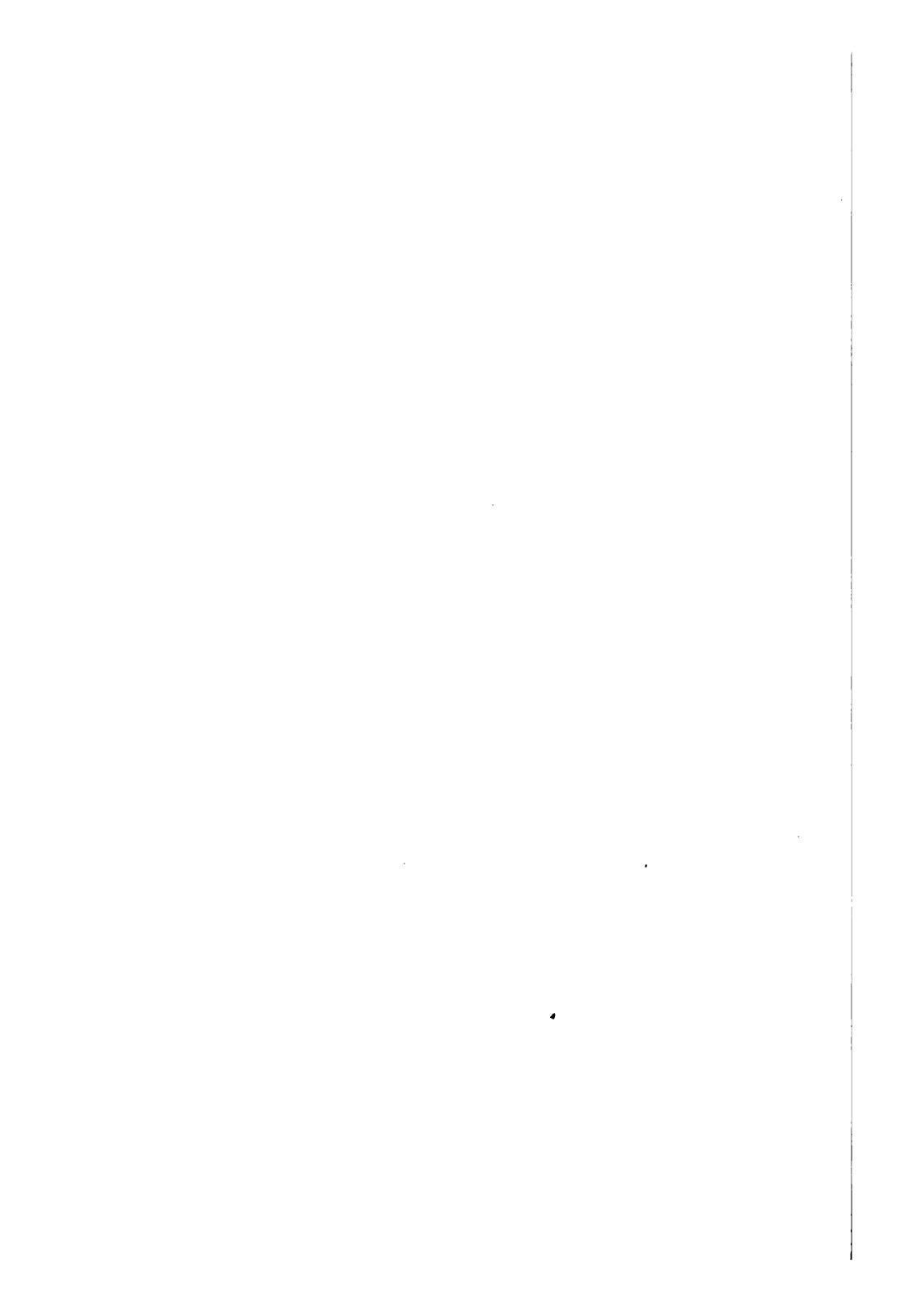
On his upper branches he wears rings of cones that instantly recall fairies and elves. When I was a child I could never have rested until I had somehow got to the top and beheld these enchanting objects at close range. But — mercifully it may be — my children have little imagination. Thus if they miss many of my subtlest joys, they are spared also my most rending sorrows.

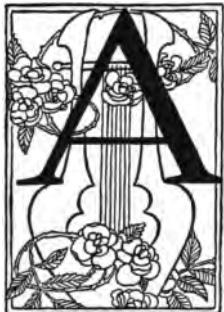
I have not told you yet of my great friend, the big chestnut by the lily pond; nor of the old clipped yews, and the famous holly hedge, the thickest in the county; nor of the monstrous Japanese laurel, of so huge a bulk that we cannot imagine how the middle of him can be kept clipped in that strictly globular form. I have christened him

The Heart Letters of a Woman

Falstaff, and await the spectacle of his next clipping with passionate interest. You must come soon and see all this joyousness for yourself. Not until you have seen and explored every corner of my home will it seem to be truly sanctuary.

Next week we cut the hay. The limes at the edge of the field will be in blossom. If I could sit with you in the hay beneath the flowering limes at noon-day, how I should store all the sweetness of it up in my heart — for the winter time!





II

MOST delightful idea has come to me. I dare not send this letter I have just written to you, it is too like a love-letter, and you remember how cross you were to me about my first love-letter to you and the black anguish occasioned by the second and last. It was contrary to your standard of honour to receive such letters from a married woman, even from me. Yet it gives me such intense pleasure to pour out my thoughts to you, especially now that we are living

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To My Beloved

further apart and meet less frequently. So I shall write to you whenever I like, but I shall keep the letters and make a little book of them — “a little book of the great enchantment,” and some day when the miracle of miracles has happened, when the great gulf is bridged and you and I are together — you and I! you and I! you and I! — we will read it together in each other’s arms — you and I! There will be harps in the air on that day, my lover, my friend! There will be choirs of nightingales, and showers of roses, and all the stars will fall and cover us — you and me! you and me!

III



MY Dear! the purple glasses! How can I thank you for your gift so exquisite in form, so precious in the thought of me implied.

You know I have been colour-mad since childhood, and the love of purple has been a kind of frenzy with me. Since I met you I can enjoy it wholeheartedly without the dull pain that deeply-realised beauty always gives to one who has not found love.

And in the new home my desire for purple has found full vent. I often

To My Beloved

stay in bed much later than I ought to, for the sheer delight of my violet satin quilt against the oxydised silver bed, the purple draperies against my soft grey walls, and — joy of my heart! — the ashen carpet, with the touch of purple in the grapes wreathed around the border.

And now on the white Adams mantelpiece over which hangs the antique gilt-framed mirror found in Italy, I shall have the deep joy of seeing your purple glasses, bearing lilies!

They are very old, of course — not for many generations has glass been cut so cunningly. What colour! what rapture! I wonder what subtle stories they could tell of love-philtres, of strange maddening wines — deadly drugs, fierce hours of delight, glorious madnesses.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

What dreams they give — your purple
glasses!

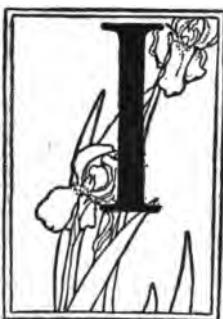
I carry them from room to room.
O, when I hold them up to the sun-
light . . . !

Last night when my door was locked,
I arranged the white mantelpiece with
the purple glasses holding lilies of the
valley, and your portrait in the plain
brown frame. Nothing else. Above was
the gleam of the mirror set in dull gold.
It gave me one moment of sheer joy,
and then I found tears slowly stealing
down my face, the bitter tears of a
lonely woman's longing.

O, my Love! why is the world so wide
for just two people?



IV



AM never alone now. I do not speak of all the people about me, nor of the scores to whom I talk every week. But ever since you spoke those quickening words of love, you are with me.

I can see you so clearly: a tall, distinguished figure, expressing great dignity and a certain austerity: a straight nose, a firm chin, a wide intellectual forehead, the high brow of a thinker, the mystic eyes of a seer. They are blue-grey in colour — the eyes — medium-sized, very

To My Beloved

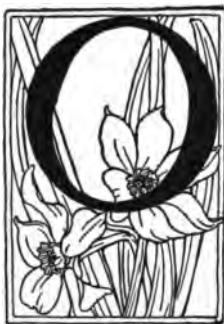
steady in their direct gaze. At the same time gentle, yet keen, — it would be difficult to express their wonderful effect of light. It is a veiled light — you are in all things subtle, my Love. And those eyes are so intensely alive, one gets the impression of tremendous vitality, of complete self-mastery. They are cold, yet with such a suggestion of fierce hidden fires — O! it is impossible to explain them.

And then, surprisingly, in this face of a scholar and idealist comes the mouth of a voluptuary! Not red, or I should loathe you, but pale, passionate, curved, beautiful. Your lips were moulded to wring women's heart-strings, my Love. O, my Love! I cannot write of your lips. . . .

The Heart Letters of a Woman

But most of all I am enchanted by your voice. It is the voice of my childhood's fairy prince who comes towards me as you speak, through the fields of arum lilies and purple iris. I can well believe the sweetness of it could woo a woman into Hell, and make of it Heaven for her. It is always so gentle and so quiet — music to me. I pray you may be speaking to me when I die. I can imagine slipping so easily and softly into the arms of "lovely and soothing Death," lulled into everlasting sleep by the magic cadence of my Lover's voice.

V



YOU are gentle, my Love,
you are beautiful. All
that you do is good.
The spell of your gentle-
ness enchant^s me more
and more. Why do poets
and writers depict their
so-called strong men violent, brutal, swag-
gering? Why do they not realise the
compelling charm of gentleness and how
great a strength lies in restraint and
calm? They give an impression of such
feebleness beneath the bluster, as a per-
son who shouts to make himself obeyed.

But you make me think of iron and

To My Beloved

marble, of a great pillar that my entwined arms cannot move, be their embrace never so passionate. And then when you speak, your voice recalls honey and running water, and far-distant violins. But how impossible it is to express in words the things we think loveliest. The limitations of our language are never so apparent as when I try to describe your voice. I must learn Italian, but even that would not help me much, no human language could. It would want some new exquisite fairy tongue — no! fairy, too, is an absurdly wrong word. Shall I say rather, it would need the grand language of a race of seers and poets — all of them children of great lovers — to express what I think of my Beloved?



HE garden is so exciting now in these magic summer nights that I can hardly bear to go to bed. It is past midnight and I have just come in from my solitary ramble.

The house is so still, only the ticking of the clocks can be heard, but outside in the garden there is a kind of wordless riot, for the sheer beauty of it all cries insistently aloud. Among the colony of owls, judging by their perpetual chorus, the most joyful matings are being celebrated. The trees are calling to the stars,

To My Beloved

the tightly-shut flowers swoon with delight
beneath the soft caresses of the moon and
O, the perfumes! the perfumes that rise
on every side whispering of love. . . . !
Whispering, did I say? I mean shouting.
Love is never so loudly trumpeted, so
superbly blazoned as by the perfumes of
a midsummer garden at night.

Twenty years seemed to fall from me
as I stood beneath the honeysuckle arch;
never before have I seen the plant in such
profusion, there are literally hundreds of
flowers. In the night the honeysuckle
scent is the queen of sweet odours, and I
felt like a young girl again as I touched
the blossoms one by one, the while I
listened to the triumphant owls.

Next year I must try and make a per-
gola of honeysuckle. Perhaps you and I

The Heart Letters of a Woman

may even walk beneath it in the summer moonlight or the still more intoxicating summer darkness, and if the god of Love be very, very gracious, the glory of the perfume and the night may even impel you to touch my hand as we walk, to hold it in yours. Those who are full-fed at Love's banquet, arrogant with joy fulfilled, would doubtless think this absurdly little to ask, but great hunger has made me meek, and even as the starving beggar asks only for a crust, so I crave but the smallest boon. Just to touch your hand and hear your voice amid the scented honeysuckle would be wonderful to me . . . just to share this glimpse of beauty with my Beloved.

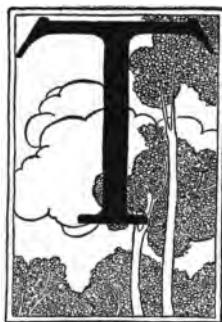
How the owls exult! I can hear them

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To My Beloved

plainly from the house: their peculiar, piercing call travels a long way, and many people hereabouts complain of the noise disturbing their rest. Myself I like their strange saga. I rejoice in the idea of happy lovers, if they be only birds. Scores of happy lovers guarding one's home in the night, and speeding the hours with their chorus of joy — what could be more delightful?

VII



ODAY a year ago, a tremendous event happened. You and I found each other. It seems strange that on a day that was to change both our lives irrevocably, the inner voice gave no warning. There was no strange sense of exultation or presage of destiny. We went our usual ways all day. In the evening I dressed, selecting my gown with no more than the usual care, though I took trouble with my hair, because Maize herself is so smart, and she and George are the kind of couple one does one's best for.

To My Beloved

And then we met, you and I. For the first time in our lives we stood in the same rooms, heard each other's names, looked each other in the face. It was just an ordinary party, an ordinary introduction. And except that we liked each other at once and our conversation flowed immediately like that of old friends, all that we said was ordinary.

The extraordinary thing was that you made no special appeal to me — no particular impression on me!

Isn't it amusing! You — you of all created beings — my Man of Men, my pillar of iron and marble. You, with your carven lover's-lips, with the white fire in your seer's eyes, your voice of distant violins — to me you were actually just an ordinary, well-bred, charming

The Heart Letters of a Woman

man, such as I meet in scores every London season!

I smile and smile as I think of it. To others I suppose you are still the same. That's the funniest part of all.

Today as I look back I bless the day and the hour, I bless the road that enabled me to reach our meeting-place and the maker of the car in which I travelled and the chauffeur that drove me. I bless the policeman who held up the traffic, the porter who took us up in the lift and the maid who opened the door. With all my heart I bless dear Maize and her adorable husband — how can we ever repay them for the part they played in transfiguring our lives? Lastly I bless your father and your mother — oh! profoundly, on my knees and from the

To My Beloved

depths of my soul, I bless and thank the mother who, in giving you life, thus discovered the whole meaning of life to me.

How undiscerning we foolish humans are! We talk a lot about being grateful for the love bestowed on us. Yet never of gratitude for the capacity for loving, nor for the greatest gift of all, someone whom we can really love, — not just someone to care for; cats, dogs, or even parrots supply that need in thousands of meagre lives. To find the destined love on whom one can spend one's whole soul is the greatest good fortune that can befall. To love deeply is far more truly satisfying than to be ever so well beloved, whilst there is no greater boredom than to be adored by a person uncongenial to us.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

So, Dearest and Best, every day I rejoice afresh that some four years before my present incarnation, Nature in her bountiful mercy decreed the fashioning of a man-child destined to be the glory of my life.

And then for thirty-five years we lived apart, in the same city! I had known the F —'s all their lives and you had been George's friend for some years. Any time during those years we might have met, but — it was not written. I was destined to live half my allotted span — just marking time until you came, — to mate, to bear and rear children, until the hour struck that brought us together and my real existence began.

Without you of course the world could not go on — not my world. The sun

To My Beloved

would grow cold as burnt-out ashes, the moon would flicker out, the stars die. There would be no colour, no laughter, no music in the world. And as for me, I should lie down upon your grave, and Nature again in her bountiful mercy would softly take away the breath of life from one to whom it had lost all meaning.

VIII



VEN that very first evening when I saw nothing extraordinary about you, the touch of your hand at farewell affected me. All the way driving home I was shaking hands with myself secretly in the dark, trying to recall that momentary magnetism just because it was pleasant. When I saw you again you actually disappointed me, and two or three meetings passed thus until one day we found ourselves talking together in perfect communion of soul. It was a Sunday evening in February

To My Beloved

— how happy I was when I went to bed that night. An indefinable radiance seemed to have come into my life, a strange new zest. Not for weeks afterwards did I understand what it meant nor connect it with you. For still my heart remained calm, my spirit in my own keeping, until that evening in April when suddenly, without a single word, you took me in your arms and kissed me.

O! my Love, your kiss!

I cannot write of it. I only know that the great moment of my life was when your beautiful, carved lips touched mine, and my soul received a god. . . .

I felt no passion. No fleshly ecstasy could find part in such a wonderful moment of soul-union. I was only conscious of the intensest joy as I opened

The Heart Letters of a Woman

my eyes and smiled. We both smiled — do you remember? — we were so glad! You said: “*What are your eyes saying?*” And then I let my eyes tell you of my wonderful new-born love.

You have never kissed me since then, not even on that day in May when you told me, very quietly, that you loved me, and that we must always be friends and try and help each other.

It is very, very hard to bear, my Love, but for the sake of your high ideal I have tried. The memory of that single kiss has had to mean to me all the hours of rapture, the countless moments, joyful and tender, that enrich the lives of happily loved women.

Not a day passes but I recall it. But meanwhile, I only touch your hand in

To My Beloved

ordinary greeting. And the years pass, and already I have lost my youth, and every day takes a little more from me. And the years pass; and the years pass. . . .

IX



UT it does not do to grumble; we have so much to be thankful for in that we have found each other at all. At least I can look at you and talk to you. And then, too, I can often serve you. What a mercy it is that sight is still free. A married woman is so hideously hemmed in by "shalt nots," it is quite curious that, long before this, some moralist has not pronounced it a crime for her to look at any man other than her husband.

Only in the rare moments when we are tete-a-tete can I satisfy the passion-

To My Beloved

ate desire of my eyes. I dare not look often at you when others are present lest the hunger of my eyes betray me. But when we are alone, I want to look at you all the time, and store up memories of the face so deeply loved to last me in the long barren days of separation. When we are at the theatre I often find myself forgetting the play, looking secretly at your profile. Sometimes you have the same need, but only seldom, as you are a man, and then our eyes meet and we smile at each other in our joy of togetherness. At such moments my fingers steal towards yours, but seldom do you allow yourself such weakness as to clasp my hand other than in formal salute.

You remember Symons' lovely lines:
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The Heart Letters of a Woman

“I know that your hands speak to my hands, and my hands speak to your hands with an irresistible desire”?

When I am away from you, I want only to see you. When I can see you, I yearn to touch you. When I touch you, I long for your embrace. So there is no rest from this longing of the soul and senses, this terrible hunger and thirst that men call love.

That you suffer too, I can plainly see. Only you never speak of it. You deny to both of us the relief and ease of speech.

Sometimes I hate your morality, I could curse your code of honour that decrees such torture for us both. No passion of merely the body could make me suffer thus. I have known what it can be at its worst, fierce and frightening

To My Beloved

ing, like streams of blood. I have known calm affection, great devotion. In the thirty-five years of my life that passed before I began to live, many blessings of human love have been showered upon me, but never before have I experienced this beautiful and terrible emotion, the dual passion of the soul and body.

It is given to few to realise, and those who know it not have failed to sound the depths of life. It is the great adventure of the soul, the transcendent experience of the heart, and I imagine in its fulness it would also be the utmost ecstasy of the flesh.

Richard Garnett understood it when he wrote: "Then is love blessed when from the cup of the body he drinks the wine of the soul."

X



ODAY I suffer. Today I am in hell. No one could call me a jealous woman, could they? When you have Mrs. L——'s grapes and peaches at your tea-parties, when you wear a carnation that Mrs. A—— shamelessly buys for you in Piccadilly, knowing your love of flowers, I make no complaint, although I decline to share these gifts when you press them on me. It does not trouble me when Miss C—— earns your gratitude by her brilliant speeches at your meetings, or when charming clients, far

To My Beloved

more subtly dressed than I can ever afford to be, sit for unnecessarily long hours with you, telling you their secrets. Unruffled I watch you at parties — so witty, so charming — smiling, flirting, uttering countless falsehoods and making women unhappy. I have sufficient mastery over self to bear it all with serenity.

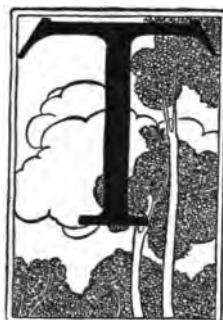
Yet every now and then I am snatched and flung into a raging torrent of mental agony entirely beyond all powers of description. No analogy of earthly things can convey one tithe of the torture. It can only be understood by the woman who deeply loves and may not give.

There it is — the poisoned sting of it. You are not mine — I am not yours. Our love has had no blossom and can

The Heart Letters of a Woman

bear no fruit. Our love is as a mighty tree, cut down in the spring time, before the flowering season. . . .

Is it Heine who said "Wherever a great thought is born there has been a Gethsemane"? How many Gethsemanes go to make a great love, I wonder?



HERE is a little spirit visitant always hovering round me. He has put a spell on me; each day it grows stronger, and I am more and more conscious of it. I feel his little fingers on my face, in my hands, clutching my skirts. Sometimes I feel those little fingers at my breast, and then — a little mouth. O! those are terrible days. . . .

When I hurriedly seek distraction, he climbs on to my knees and puts his warm arms round my neck. They are so little and soft, but they hold me more

To My Beloved

strongly than iron bands. If I run away, he runs after me; I hear his little feet upon the floor, along the garden paths, and on the lawns. He likes the grass; on the grass he gallops — oh, so enchantingly! I see him plainly through my blinding tears. He has such strong, splendid legs. . . .

All day, all night, I hear his little voice at my heart, calling — calling — calling. The sweetness of it no words could convey, and yet it pierces my soul with an intolerable sorrow, too bitter, O, God! too bitter for bearing! The words are always the same. . . .

“Mother! Mother! Mother!”

It is your child, my Love. Our little spirit-child, asking — praying — for the life we are forced to deny.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

I try to think of my other children, the dear little sons and daughters whose merry laughter I can hear at this moment. They too are fine and sturdy, they are healthy and happy, loving and good. But they are not yours, my Love — not yours, and so it is they who are unreal — just ghosts, though romping so noisily on the lawn — only ghosts! It is the little spirit visitant calling at my heart who is my only real child. He alone is dowered with the sole true Right to Life — that is, being begotten and borne in deep, tender and passionate love.

Sometimes at night he lies in my arms. Oh, he is so dear, so soft, so warm — our little child! Generally I call him

To My Beloved

my little boy, sometimes my little girl;
but always the baby is most heavenly-sweet.

I clasp him tightly in my arms, and so real is the vision that I can truly feel the warmth and roundness of his perfect little body. He is strong, without spot or blemish, this beautiful fruit of love, and oh, my Heart! — he has such long, long curling eyelashes, and beneath of course are your eyes, the blue eyes of my adoration — yours, yours! but with the child-spirit shining through. All of him is yours, he is true son of My Man. . . .

They are such happy hours when it is all real to me. I hug him in my arms and sing with joy; and then I show him to you, and I watch your slow smile

The Heart Letters of a Woman

of delight as his little hand clasps tightly around your first finger, and you say, as all fathers have said and ever will say: "How the little beggar grips!" We stand together rejoicing in our child, and then sometimes you put your arm around me, and your eyes grow very tender and very solemn as you softly thank me for the great gift of my womanhood, and with happy eyes I thank you for the kingly gift of your fatherhood. And then our lips meet in the most sacred of all kisses — the embrace of a mother and a father over their firstborn.

O, my God! it can never happen! It can never happen! It can never happen!

O, God! have mercy on me! Let me

[49]

To My Beloved

die! Take me quickly from this world of torture and hell — take me from the lover who is so cold and cruel, from the child I may not bear. Bury my love-racked body in the deepest grave on earth, and let my love-torn soul be wrapped in everlasting sleep, never, never again to incarnate.

It can never happen! It can never happen!

XII



HERE must be something wrong about a world where a love like mine for you can go unfulfilled. There must be something wrong about the laws and conventions that decree so magnificent a thing should be suppressed.

Is there then no hope — no hope at all for us, most Dear?

No hope, of course! We must each get what little good we can out of it, in a colourless sort of way, and for the rest — crush it down, says the Law,

To My Beloved

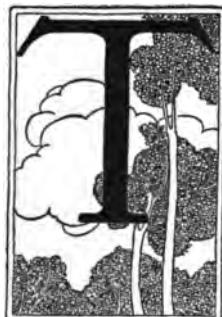
drive it from your lives, tear it out of
your hearts . . . and if your heart-
strings break, what is one more broken
heart among so many?

And so the good, glad love is thwarted,
maimed; the splendid passion destined
to be the supreme joy of two of God's
creatures is turned into a scourge — a
sword — a bitter, bitter cup.

Is it right, my Love? Is there no
better way?

Does God, the All-Loving, really wish
this thing do you suppose?

XIII



HEY are hard, the women of today; again and again this conclusion is forced upon me.

This afternoon I met Mrs. L — E — at a literary party. You know what an exquisite tenderness breathes through all her work. She has a great charm of manner and her voice is gentle and sweet. She fascinated me at first; I let myself talk freely to her, and she seemed to respond. Then, gradually, a faint chill crept over me, and presently I realised that no spark of

To My Beloved

sympathy could be struck from her, that there was no great mother-heart concealed in her, as her books had led me to expect; all was hard — hard and self-seeking. I shrank back into my shell, wondering.

Above all things I must not let myself grow hard, nor my trouble make me bitter. The woman you love must be always truest woman — gentle, tender, kind. I can imagine such a situation as mine creating a great well of bitterness in the heart — as the months and years go on — a well that it would take many life-times of love to fill up. But this must not happen to *your* woman.

Whenever the pain becomes too intolerable and one of my awful moods of despair descends on me, blackening

The Heart Letters of a Woman

all the rare sweetness with which your presence has illumined my days, then I remind myself of what my life would be like without you. But the imagination cannot picture such an extremity of desolation, my mind remains blank.

In truth my days are all you and nothing but you. Every morning immediately I wake, I think of you with a thought that is a prayer. All through the day my thoughts go out to you like prayers — blessing you, wishing you well. I kiss you always in thought as soon as I awake. My spirit kisses your sweet, cold eyes, and sometimes if I feel strong enough to bear it calmly, I kiss also your beloved lips; and I talk to you in a whisper, very lovingly, may be very foolishly — yes, certainly very foolishly!

To My Beloved

Directly I get up I go to each window in turn and say "good-morning" to my trees; the sight of them all around the dew-drenched lawns always lightens my heart, and you are with me all the time. If the sun is shining I rejoice with you; we join in our adoration of this greatest of all gods. If it is raining I remember how easily you catch cold, and am concerned for you. When I pour out the morning tea, I find myself hoping that whoever is looking after you has remembered the sugar. And so on, all through the day my little tender thoughts go out towards you, each winged with its burden of unutterable love.

At night you never come to me. I try to think you do, but it never seems really true. In vain I shut my eyes and my

The Heart Letters of a Woman

spirit summons yours. I tell myself you are there, but all the time I know it is a pretence; my empty arms bear mournful witness.

But the other night suddenly you came. I suppose in some rare moment of weakness, you must have let down the iron barriers of your will and sent love-thoughts out to me. All at once your dear presence was vivid and real. It was like sudden music in my loneliness — like the flashing of glorious colours — clouds of purple and rose, silver-streaked, sun-illumined.

You held me so tenderly. . . . You were so sweet. . . .

The last thing at night I look once more out of all the windows — the garden is even more gracious at night

To My Beloved

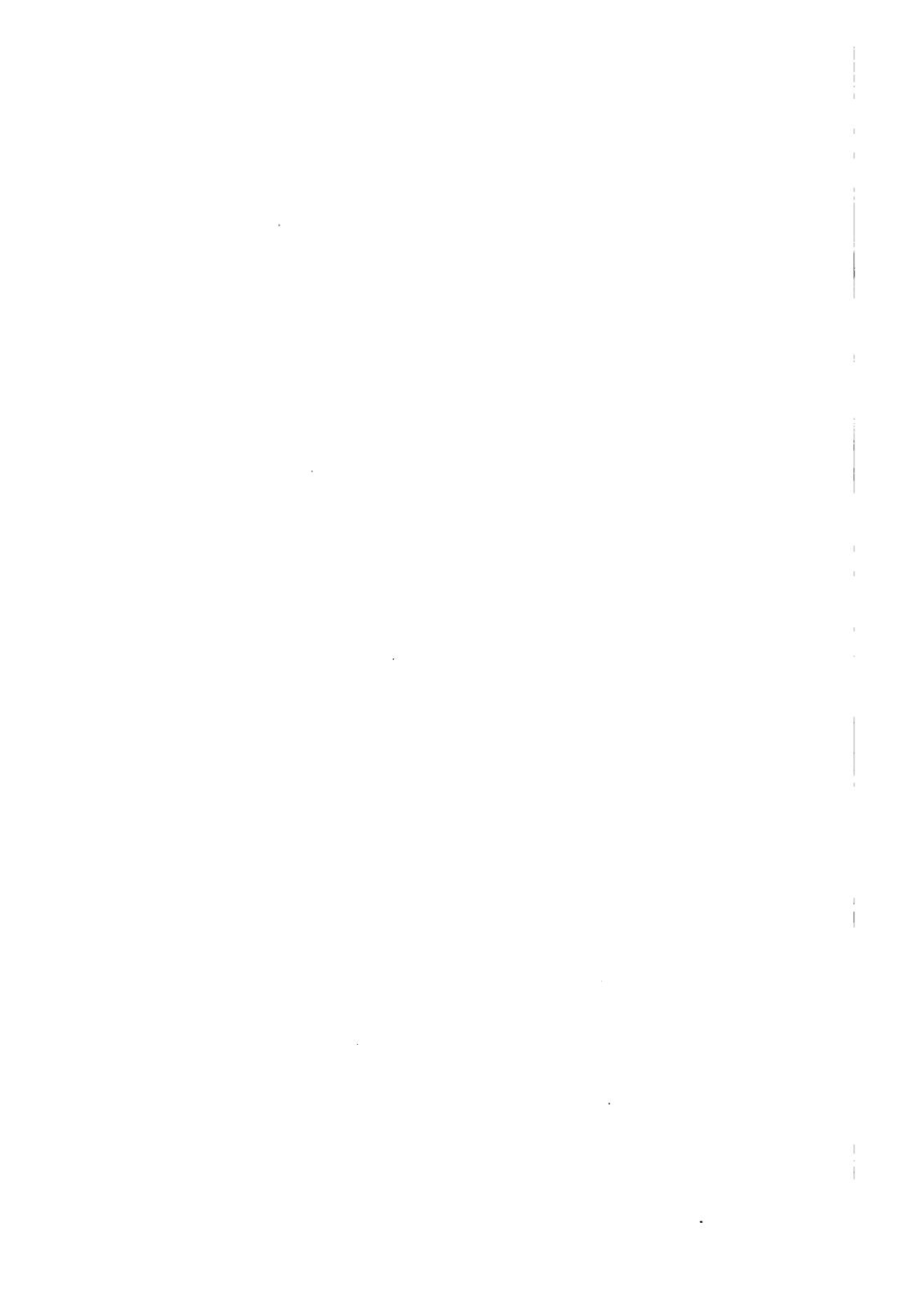
whether in soft darkness or in the glory of moonlight. The outlines of the trees comfort me inexpressibly and I always feel as I look at them that the last little prayer I whisper over the fir-grove must be answered. It is always the same prayer, the one that goes up daily from millions of women's hearts, that passionate plea for just a little joy before it is too late.

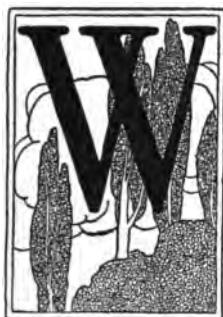
Before it is too late! Too late, most sorrowful of phrases: before the horrible death of beauty that all women dread as fanatics dread hell-fire, before the breasts shrivel, and the limbs shrink, and the soft cheeks are seamed, and the bright eyes grow dim, and the red lips pale and wither and all desire fades from the eyes of men. *Too late!*

The Heart Letters of a Woman

Only well-beloved women can calmly contemplate growing old. It is the unloved, the unfulfilled to whom it is so terrible.

Sometimes, on my bad nights, I look in the glass and think how few love-years there are left to me, and with what mad speed they are flying — empty! The worst times of all are when, together with this dreadful deadly thought comes the presence of my little spirit visitant with his soft clinging arms, his tiny torturing hands, and his little voice that calls and calls and will not be soothed to silence. On these nights I envy the drunkard and the morphineuse, and all who can buy oblivion. By these bitter, bitter nights that might have been so fair, I know there can be no hell hereafter — no, not for the greatest sinner. Hell is here.



XIV

HEN I am inclined to rebel, I try to picture the time before you came into my life. Doubtless I was happier in the material sense, certainly I was more gay, more easily able to snatch joy from trivial matters. But it was mere existence, I did not live, and every now and then some poignant realisation of life's deep beauty wrung my heart with the knowledge of my spiritual barrenness. To them who know not love in all its fullness, beauty has often no gift but supreme pain.

To My Beloved

On the surface all was smooth and bright, but far far below, great depths in me were calling, and the hungry soul in me waited and starved and struggled for life.

Then you came, and in loving you I found and saved my soul. In loving you I looked Life in the eyes and laid my head upon the breast of Joy. In loving you I built for myself a temple of delight with a beauty that no tongue can tell of.

There I have lived ever since, on my knees before the altar that bears your name.

Dearest, I bless you and bless you. May God be merciful and kind to my Man of Men.

The word “dearest” used not to be a favourite endearment of mine, but it is

The Heart Letters of a Woman

the only love-term you have ever used to me, so consequently now most sacred in my eyes.

On that unforgettable night when you spoke the words that transfigured my world, you said it twice, in soothing me: "Yes, Dearest, I understand" — "I know, Dearest — I know."

Not a day has passed since that I have not said them softly to myself, recalling the caress of your voice. They fall upon my wounds like exquisite cold water. From the memory of your love-words I draw new life.

"*I love you.*"

"*Yes, Dearest, I understand.*"

"*I know, Dearest, — I know.*"

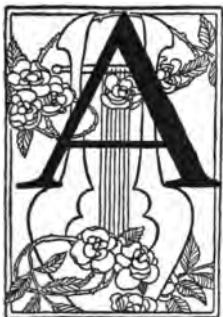
Three sentences and a single embrace — out of these I have built my brave

To My Beloved

Palace of Delight — my glorious Temple of Joy. With these I have changed the world.

Truly the ways of a woman's heart are wonderful!

XV



FRENCH poet has written: "Nothing is possible without woman . . . it is only through woman that we see God." For me it is only through you, my Love, that I see God, and I realise more now than ever before the beauty of the Infinite Goodness which is "Love, Truth and Life," in other words — God. Love for a woman is the great destroyer. In its burning fires everything else perishes — religion, principles, the ties of blood — all are devoured. Having received the love-flame

To My Beloved

in her heart, henceforth she becomes its slave. Nothing else has any part in her, and this is one reason why love often makes women non-moral — in the sense of recognising no other obligations but those of love.

When I walk among my trees and survey my charming home, when I consider how my husband respects me, how my children love me, I feel in reaction to my moods of rebellion a great thankfulness to you, Beloved, that I can look the world in the face. . . . How many men would have treated me as you have? There is none like my Love!

You know I am absolutely yours, to give myself entirely to you would mean for me a happiness so deep, so sweet, so intoxicating that I tremble all over to my

The Heart Letters of a Woman

inmost heart at the very thought. It is only your iron will, your high sense of right and of honour that has saved me from the divine damnation of love. It is you who are good, Dear One, not I. Oh! how wicked I could be for you! For you I would commit any crime, sink to any depths and count my shame as glory. For you, through you, I could soar to any heights.

I love to think of myself as your slave. I wish we lived in other climes, other ages, that I might really be your slave, and kiss your feet, and lay all I had before your throne. Your cruelty would make me happier than another's worship. I would rather you strike me than another man kiss. Even a blow would be sweet to me if given by your dear hand. . . .

To My Beloved

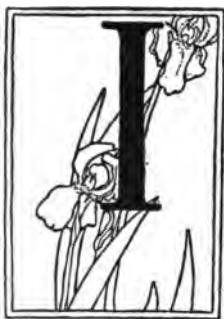
Oh, this is not right! I ought not to feel like this. I'm afraid I am very bad for you, my King! If I were your wife. . . .

Your wife! There are some things I could not endure. Your death, yes — you would be always with me then, and Death is everyone's best friend; but your marriage, no! impossible! I could not live through the day that gave you to another woman in the sight of the world. If my heart did not break of its own accord, as of course it would, I should swiftly summon kindly and comforting oblivion to my aid. The Valley of the Shadow with all its terrors would be a place of great joy compared to any earthly habitation on my Love's wedding day.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

Do not forget — never forget! your
marriage bells would be my funeral knell
as surely as if you yourself thrust a knife
into my heart.

XVI



FIND myself wondering sometimes how it would have affected my life if you had never told me of your love. Not to love you seems an impossibility, as not to breathe.

Yet I do firmly believe that "Love is the reflection of Love," and that it is not natural to continue spending the divine essence without response. The Love-flower needs some sun and rain, however little, otherwise it cannot thrive long; it forms no roots and must eventually wither and die away. Women are apt to cheat

To My Beloved

themselves about love, to pretend they have found what they so desperately sought, in the same way as children pretend that their holland overalls are a knight's armour or a queen's robe. No, that is not a good analogy, for the child's pretence is simple and joyous, and easily discarded for a new device, whilst the woman's deliberate self-delusioning is pitiful — a tragic revelation of heart's poverty.

So much for make-shifts: in reality, for a woman to continue to love lastingly a man who has no answering affection for her must surely be very rare, and only to be found, if at all, in the most starved lives. Even there it would probably be in essentials just love of love, not really of an individual.

This is not to say that the agony of
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The Heart Letters of a Woman

unrequited love is not terrible. I only claim that it must necessarily be short. However fierce, the pain cannot be lasting. Generally speaking, love must reap love or die. The rivers rush to the ocean and do not seek to embrace the dry land; the oceans mingle only with each other; and great human heart throbs to great human heart. I am only thinking now of course of the *real* thing, the intense passion of love, the elemental hunger of mankind for joy and beauty and not merely the desire to play for a space in the sunshine that is so often confused with it.

Had you never revealed your love for me, I suppose mine for you would eventually have faded away: then I should never have known this wonderland of the soul that you have opened to me. But

To My Beloved

of course we *had* to love each other; we had a message for one another, and no earthly power can stop the delivery of the mystic message. Whatever the delays, whatever the hindrances — you and I were bound to stand soul to soul at last, and to exchange our gifts.

My Dear, as I write I can see your grave face with that austere, meditative look upon it. It is so clear before me, and as I look wistfully, longingly at you, gradually your eyes soften and soften until their glance enfolds me like a caress. Blue eyes of my longing, strange eyes — cruel yet tender, stern yet gentle — blue eyes of my heart: with quivering lips I kiss you, and from my own closed eyes tears rain suddenly down. Tears are always very close to the lids of a suffering

The Heart Letters of a Woman

lover. I weep, I weep for the desperate longing to hold your head one minute on my breast. From "the hard cross of hope deferred" I call to you for mercy. O Love! Love! how you have crucified me!

XVII



OU will not be annoyed, I hope, but I have confided in Amy S —. It was necessary for me to do so, as I could no longer bear the pain alone. I said I was not a jealous woman, and all my life I have truly believed this, but now I know that all women are jealous — when they love. And day by day I have been getting more jealous and restless. I hate Mrs. A — and her carnations. Why should she give you flowers? To *buy* flowers for a man — what could be more shameless? I love to give you

To My Beloved

what grows in my garden. The rose-tree of your choice is my special care throughout the summer as the violet-frame in the spring, and all the year round I pester the gardener about the carnations — all for you. But to buy flowers for a man is another matter. I call it unnatural. Mrs. A — with her grand trophies from Solomon's, shared with you — the same flower on your breast and hers — it sickens me. She is so pretty too, with that quiet dark fascination that I know appeals to you. And she is much younger than I — horrible fact! And above all, she is free. You never talk of her but seem, so my jealous fancy tells me, to avoid the subject when I sing her praises, watching your face in anguish.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

There are so many women round you, sometimes it all hurts me too much. Of course you give me no real cause for anxiety, on the other hand how can I know that you still care? Week follows week, and month succeeds month, and you say nothing; I watch you narrowly; I weigh your words and ponder them again and again, trying to extract some hint of love that will bring a ray of comfort to my pain.

Richard Garnett who writes so wonderfully of love says: "Sometimes love's touch means more than love's embrace." That's what I miss most of all — the touch of love. One can weave words for oneself, put all sorts of tender speeches into the Beloved's mouth; the imagination can run riot in embraces,

To My Beloved

picturing the utmost ecstasy, but nothing can make up for this complete absence of love's little touches and thrilling contacts.

If I were free to touch you when I chose, to link arms and press yours to my side, to hold your hand, sometimes to put my lips to the hollow of the palm, to throw my arm carelessly round your neck, stroke your hair, lay my head when tired on your shoulder — if you and I could do these little things to each other, it would make all the difference in the world to me — the difference between darkness and light. I believe I should be quite happy then.

In the early days when you were feeling your way to me, I have often heard you say that the second best would

The Heart Letters of a Woman

never content you. Because I cannot be your wife, you will not take me as your lover in the fullest sense of the word, nor yet as a sweetheart, nor even establish between us the sweet slight intimacy of the casual touch. And yet I know you want me just as much as I want you. Only you are good and strong and iron-willed, and oh, so moral! whilst I am frail and weak and love-torn.

I think of the waste of joy. . . . All the great dullness of this world, the immense, vast dreariness, the monotony, the unrest — ah, the terrible unrest! and then piercing through it all, the exquisite flame of love, dispelling all the gloom, lighting up the whole life so brilliantly. . . . *Cover it up, veil it, hide your eyes from the light.*

To My Beloved

It is a waste, isn't it?

But I know how you feel, most Dear, with love nothing stands still. Clasped hands lead to locked lips: the touch of love would soon make us sweethearts, and sweethearts become lovers, and to be the lover of a married woman is the accursed thing to a man of your calibre. I know, my Dear, I know. . . .

All this time I have not told you of my talk with Mrs. S——. I went to her one day, thinking of the splendid violets in your buttonhole. They are obese, bloated beside my scanty little home-grown ones. I was so full of misery that it seemed to emanate from me. Dear Amy with her atmosphere of gentle radiance seemed to draw my secret from me. I told her everything,

The Heart Letters of a Woman

it gave me such heart's-ease. She held my hand as she listened, and into her soft eyes came two tears.

"My dear, I understand so well," she said. "I've been through it all myself. I know how it maims and wrecks us, but men are different you know; it means so much less to them. They don't understand, they know not what they do."

It comforted me so much to talk about my love after all these long months. I knew she would keep it absolutely secret and that you would not grudge me the relief of just one confidante. I loathe the idea of degrading the sacred name of love by idle chatter as so many women do, but this quiet talk with a gentle and grave woman like Mrs.

To My Beloved

S — I felt was a good thing to have.

But it surprised me very much when she said: "How strange that you should give him all that — a woman like you!"

"To you, I suppose he's just an ordinary man?" I asked.

"N — no," she answered, musingly. "He's too upright to be exactly ordinary, but of course I see him as the world sees him — a dear, of course, but just a little priggish and *precieux*."

You, my love, you!

"And though he has a charming manner, and there's certainly something distinguished about him, he doesn't *look* the hero of romance, does he?"

I tried to explain that in my eyes you did, and then a remembered frag-

The Heart Letters of a Woman

ment from one of Meredith's novels came to help my halting speech, — “*So kingly was he arrayed in the thunder of the bolt that had struck the pair.*” That is it exactly, the thunderbolt of love has made you in my eyes for ever the most splendid of men.

“How tremendously proud he must be of having won such love, and from you,” she said, when I had explained. “That is a distinction for any man.”

It amused me so much that anyone should think like that of me, where you are concerned. I could but laugh and wonder.

XVIII

EXT to being with you, my greatest joy now is to shut myself away from everyone, in my beautiful flower-filled room, at dusk, with only the thought of you for company.

The thin Russian cigarettes, the soft cushions of my long purple lounge drawn up to the hearth, no other light but the fire, no other companionship but the scent of the flowers and the great flame of my love: this is happiness, or rather as near as I can get to it without your actual presence.

I want no one else but you. My love
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To My Beloved

wraps me round as with a mantle of fire, shutting off all the world, entirely possessing me. It is an extraordinarily violent emotion, this wonderful passion of mine.

Secure in my solitude, I give myself up completely to you. I take off my mask, and let the glorious wild thoughts rush over me. I think: first, of being quite, quite alone with you in the utmost seclusion, in some far distant spot — you and I. You take me in your arms, and at last I am at rest. I can touch you — at last I can touch you; my hands have been so hungry to touch you. Oh! the ecstasy of satisfying this frightful hunger of the hands! I have ached for you so, and you are here now, you are mine, you are mine!

The Heart Letters of a Woman

And then you kiss me. No pen can describe the rapture of our meeting lips. The red thoughts surge through my brain, my joy in you is too great, too altogether overwhelming for one mind, one body to express. I feel my spirit must burst from its prison in the utter madness of our embrace, the "sweetness keener than a sword, joy like a sudden spear."

What a beautiful end that would be to all the longing and striving — to die of sheer joy in my Love's arms, and as one died to live a thousand enchanted lives beneath his lips. . . .

I wind my arms closely around you, and hold you as tightly as I can, putting all my strength into the clasp. Some power quite outside me seems to

To My Beloved

do this, not me, and never before in love have I felt this need: the arms laid softly, quietly round the sweetheart's neck, that is all I can remember of far-off other loves — a passive submission, perhaps a gentle patting of the shoulder, or stroking of the head, kisses taken and given with wide-open eyes. But with you I involuntarily shut my eyes, and I want almost to kill you by the passion of my desiring arms. . . .

Yes, I would like to die beneath your lips, and to crush out your life too, with my embrace. If they were kind they would burn us together in the same purple coffin, our heads close together on a pillow of pansies. Then at last I could lie in your arms for a little space, at last your dear head could lie on my

The Heart Letters of a Woman

breast where I have so longed to pillow it. O! dying would be well worth while! And how I should rejoice to see my poor love-racked body — so useless because it has brought you no delight — to see it consumed in clean, beautiful flames, locked in your arms!

Do you remember, quite early in our friendship, that time we were driving to the House of Commons in a taxi-cab, and suddenly you took my hands and held them very tightly, and said, entirely irrelevantly, "You could be savage in love." It was one of the few occasions you ever let your eyes speak. I had to look down at our clasped hands, I could find no words. And then you released my hands and resumed your talk of politics in the coldest possible voice.

To My Beloved

Savage — what a tame word for my great mad love! And yet all think me such a quiet, gentle woman.

Thus I dream of you in the firelight while the thin blue smoke curls above me. Sometimes it makes me intensely happy, at others I weep bitterly and bite the purple cushions and writhe in an anguish of despair at the thought of how hideously Destiny has cheated me.

The scenes of our imagined life together pass endlessly before me: passionate hours of wild love-madness, hours of deepest tenderness, of "sisterly, sweet hand-in-hand" serious hours when we talk of your career and make plans for the future, and such glad hours when I am able to work for you, to serve you in some way. Then there are delightful

The Heart Letters of a Woman

times when we discuss books and art and life, matching our keen wits — there are always such endless subjects of conversation between you and me; and often we have our spells of irresponsible gaiety, when we play games, tramp the country roads together and "lark" as if we were boy and girl again.

And all with you, my own Companion — dear mate of my heart, and soul, and mind and body — always, always with you, and every hour irradiated with the divine happiness that can only be realised by perfectly mated lovers, living together. What a splendid thing we could make of life, you and I! What a palace we could build to leave behind us!

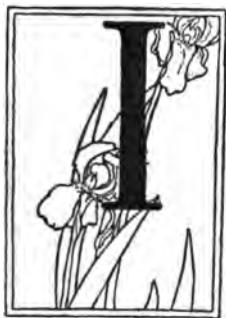
At your feet I pour out my magnifi-
[93]

To My Beloved

cent love. Must it all be wasted — all but the little bit that helps to inspire you, and that prevents me from taking my life?

All wasted!

XIX



FEEL very much better after this week-end. Two whole days and three evenings together — how happy you have made me! I recall every moment, every word.

Your smile is in my remembrance all day — an adorable smile it is! — and I repeat to myself all your witty, sometimes rather wicked remarks at which I have laughed like a child. We have been just like two children together, playing in the gardens. I am sure the trees are pleased with you; my dear

To My Beloved

trees like me to be happy. My husband likes you, although you two have not a single thing in common, the children love you, although you never play with them and are rather a severe critic of their childish misdemeanours; the servants adore you, in spite of the unusual trouble you give. Even the dogs enjoy your visit, and I who love you so, I your lover am in heaven.

You came to me so pale, my Love, so grey and worn-looking after your immense exertions at the bye-election. Sometimes you assume an entirely boyish aspect, but when you are very tired your face is strangely dimmed, and your hair seems silvered all over instead of only faintly touched with grey—a touch that perhaps contributes to the extreme

The Heart Letters of a Woman

distinction of your appearance. It made me so happy to see how you revived under my care, going back to work a different being.

The weather too has been unusually merciful. Our long walks on Saturday and Sunday through the muddy lanes gave me extraordinary pleasure. Today it is more like April than January and I could almost find it in my heart to regret that I am so soon timed for my usual winter exodus. But the East always calls me at this time of the year, and last winter you remember the election kept us at home. The Sphinx is longing for me I know. She and I have so much to talk about always, and this year I have such thrilling secrets of love to whisper to her. She will be so inter-

To My Beloved

ested in my love-dream: really you ought to come to Egypt and show yourself to her; you would be a man after her own heart. Your eyes of ice and fire would shake her out of her passivity. Your smile, romance incarnate, would revive in her age-old memories of great passions. She would grow young again, casting off the centuries, as she gazed at your subtle lips, and surely her strange battered face would wake to life, at the first sound of your voice! The desert is full of wonderful soft sounds, and the sigh of the palm-trees in the wind is the most exquisite music, but none of it can equal in thrilling sweetness the golden voice of my Deeply-Loved.

The desert recalls my life. You, Love
[98]

The Heart Letters of a Woman

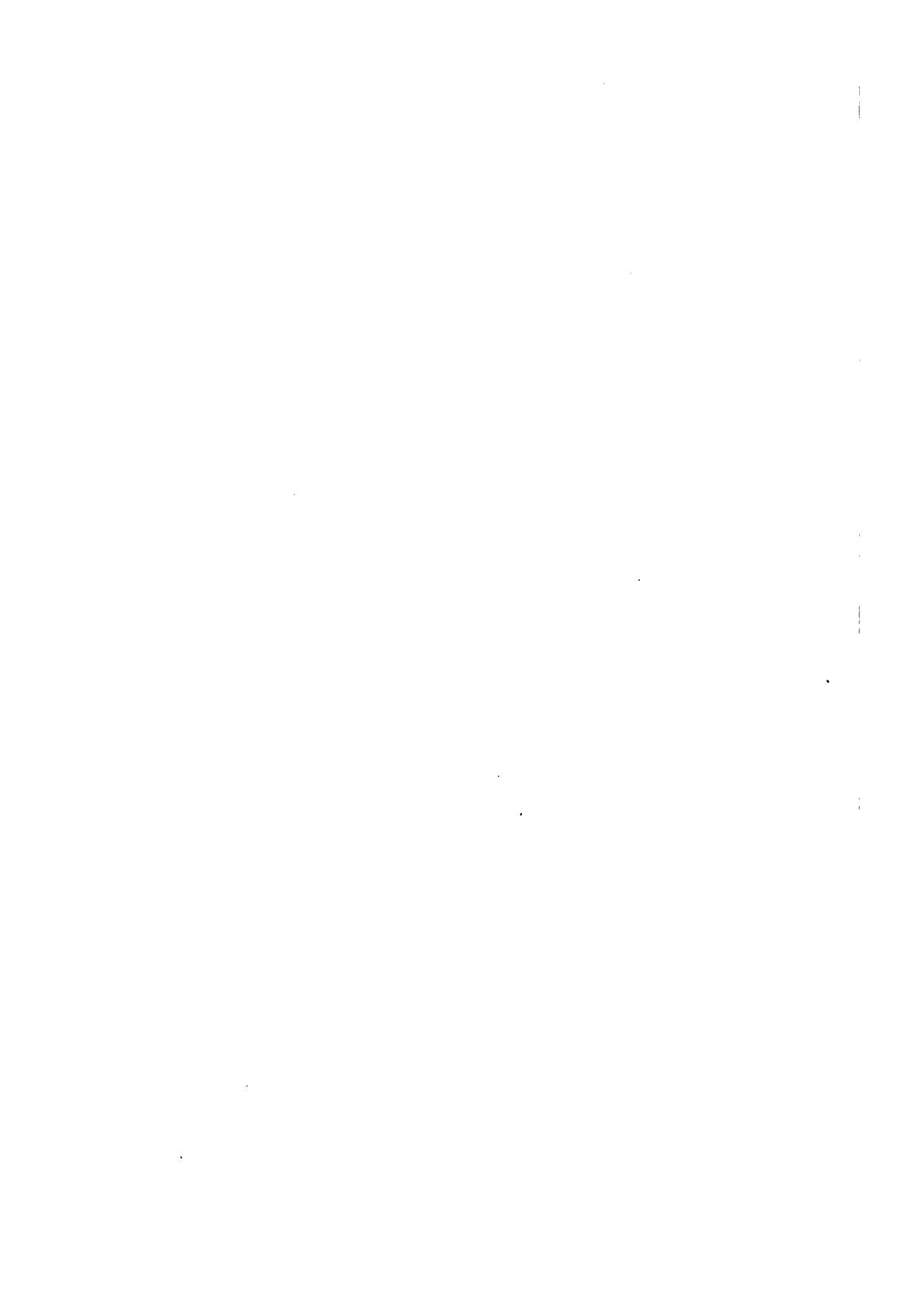
of my heart, are my Oasis — the one
glad green spot.

How my life is enriched by you!
And I? have I made any difference to
yours?

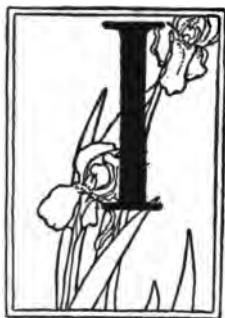
I sometimes think men do not really
want women to love them; they want
only submission to their brief desires
and the grace and comfort of a woman's
presence in the background of their
lives — the foreground being filled by
more interesting matters — business,
sport, ambition, etc. A great love em-
barrasses them — but this is heresy: I
must not breathe such thoughts to you,
whose love comprises my world.

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XX



HAVE a great dislike of hoarding clothes. Ever since I was a girl, my wardrobe has been diligently weeded out several times a year, and nothing retained that was not going to be worn. Yet when I came to turn out my possessions as usual before going abroad, I found there were several *démodé* costumes that it was nevertheless impossible to part with.

There was the black and white lace gown I wore both on the evening we

To My Beloved

met and on that unforgettable night of stars months later when I knew your first, last kiss. Your eyes first saw me in that gown, your arms have held me in it.

Dearest, will you laugh to hear that I kissed it many times before I put it reverently away in lavender?

Then there is my so well-worn blue serge coat and skirt which belongs by every right of reason and precedent to my parlour maid. Already she casts proprietary glances at it, but it, too, I put away in lavender because it was the first of my garments you ever admired, and we have had such good times together whilst I wore it, in those early days when you were flirting with me. Do you know, my own Love, I

The Heart Letters of a Woman

often look back regretfully to those earlier days of flirtation. You used to touch me then, and to say nice, wicked, little, heart-fluttering things to me. After you grew to love me, all this ceased. I missed your little naughtinesses more than a man could understand. I used to worry about your changed attitude, and wonder what I had done to cause it. Later, when I began to understand your strange code, I saw what it meant, and that in a comfortless sort of way it was a great compliment: you put me above the small change of flirtation, you revered me. I recall how you had said in one of our earliest discussions, "I can play the fool as well as any man, but love is a solemn matter."

To My Beloved

Then there is my purple and gold evening cloak. It is far too gorgeous to wear in the country, and already the cut is slightly old-fashioned. I bought it because of your love of rich colour. It is not quite my own shade — the deep *blue-purple*; there is too much red in it, but I liked it because you did, and because I wore it on two very happy evenings with you. It was a very expensive garment; I ought to sell it and buy a sober one for country and train use, but I mean to keep it till I die, for it has one especially heavenly memory for me. Do you remember T —'s concert? I wore the cloak then. It was much handsomer than my gown, so I kept it on. You came late, and there was a little crossness between us. I had

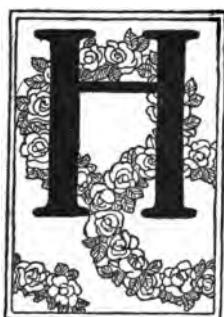
The Heart Letters of a Woman

counted on your escort for a function on the following day, and you pleaded business. You laughed at me in that excessively exasperating way you can laugh, and called me "sulky." Then of course I sulked in earnest. I was thinking bitterly of all that I gave you and how little you could really care, when suddenly I looked up and found your eyes fixed, oh! so hungrily and longingly upon my lips. . . .

My heart leapt in my breast with a great throb of joy and inwardly I trembled.

That was one of the moments when we both realised the true awfulness of Love. . . .

XXI



OW I have hated this parting! Ever since we started this morning I can think of nothing but your beloved pale face as I last saw it at Charing Cross. You spoke little, and in the crowd of farewells none noticed your silence. The rose-red carnations which you brought have comforted me so much. I left you until the last, and then took off my glove, under cover of my muff, so that our hands might touch at parting. The strange magnetism in your fingers to

To My Beloved

which I am ever so sensitive gave me a second's rapture. As the train started, one swift arrow of desire shot from your eyes to mine. I know not what agony of longing love looked from my eyes to yours. Then it was over — I was gone from you. . . .

And now I shall not see you for months. What immeasurable foolishness to put hundreds of miles of land and sea between us! Oh! why did you let me go?

I knew the going would be horrible, but I felt there might be compensations. Yes, and there *will* be; I shall soon begin to feel the relief. That endless strain of expecting letters, or worse — telephone calls — will be eased. Every

The Heart Letters of a Woman

time the 'phone bell rings I rush across the drawing room and hall with pulses racing and in my heart a wordless prayer that it may be you. I suppose all women in love do the same — foolish creatures! And then it generally isn't you, and the blood ebbs painfully back to the heart and everything seems so dull.

All this will cease now, and when I get to Egypt the postman can only delight or agonise me once or twice a week. It will do me a lot of good I know, but it takes time to be resigned.

I am writing this in the train as we crawl slowly across France. Your rose-red carnations make me happier; it was a good thought of yours, my inmost Heart. I am feasting my eyes upon

To My Beloved

them and shall try and make them last until I can get fresh ones at Naples. Did I ever tell you how the natives of Honolulu bring gorgeous garlands of carnations to decorate the arriving traveller? One can go royally crowned and festooned with these choice flowers in return for a few pence. I remember wandering on the beach one long sun-lit afternoon with my dear father, both of us wreathed in flowers like Jacks-in-the-green. I must have been about fifteen then — how happy I was with that most wonderful and blessed of men. The heavy perfume of the flowers is supposed to make people ill — (it never did us) — and when the boat weighs anchor the steward goes round collecting all the lovely garlands to throw away.

The Heart Letters of a Woman

The train jolts detestably, and I have to fix my thought on the landscape for distraction. The multitudinous avenues of long thin trees that edge the country roads in France and outline three sides (but never four) of many gardens and fields have a great attraction for me, especially silhouetted against the sky as now. In the distance they look like cypresses, but seen close their foliage is less compact, and they appear to be a kind of fir. One day I must find out why the fourth side of the plot should be invariably left out in the cold.

I love avenues. In the dream-home of my imagination which is spelled "You-and-I" there shall be avenues of poplars, of pines, of cypresses, avenues of giant sweet peas and hollyhocks, great beds of

To My Beloved

violas and pansies all cool purples and blues — and of course range upon range of tulips, strangest and most bewildering of all flowers.

Jewels have little effect on me, as you know, but flowers excite me more than even music, poetry or trees. One dare not think too long about their eternal mystery. Some people would find this neurotic and morbid, these unpleasant words are so often used to denote beauty worship, by the crowd who do not understand. Wouldn't an avenue of cedars be wonderful? One would want to walk there on very solemn times of special moment, such as before the birth of a child or when fighting a sin of great sweetness. The cedars would give one courage and calm; they would brace up

The Heart Letters of a Woman

the soul. I should like to walk slowly down such an avenue — alone in the moonlight, and find you waiting at the end — to take me in your arms.

In “the Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s,” the Beloved is described by his Lover as being “excellent as the cedars.” Isn’t that fine? By the bye, don’t you like the word *lover* used of a woman? I do. The word *mistress*, charming to the courtly Georgians, has now fallen upon evil days, and sunk to base usage, implying hire and barter. I like a man to think of a woman as his lover, just as she thinks of him as her lover.

But to return to flowers, I think the most entralling of all growing things is the *lilium auratum*, the golden-rayed lily of Japan. Though lacking in colour, its

To My Beloved

strange waxen petals — exquisitely curving, marvellously spotted inside — its trembling stamens, and the delicate miracle of it all makes such an appeal to me that I cannot bear now to have it in my room. The golden-rayed lily is for happy lovers only; it ought to be recognised as the flower-symbol of love, instead of the myrtle and the orange-blossom. Its scent is the most passionate thing I know, except the curve of your lips! Its scent and its beauty mocks my longing, and so last summer I turned all the pots out of my rooms, and in future I shall only have them in the borders. They will not hurt me there and I shall not allow myself to linger near them, or drink in their terrible perfume.

If ever I come to you, my Love, the
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golden-rayed lily must bless our bridal. A ring of golden-rayed lilies must encircle us when the great hour of exultation strikes . . . and far, far away, some one must faintly play Brahms' *Sapphische Ode* upon a violin.

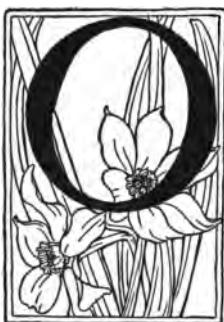
Oh *no!* my Love, nothing would really matter in that great hour — lilies or ashes, a palace or a cottage, a garden or a desert, an ice-field or a volcano, purple or rags — it would all be one! No setting, be it grand and beautiful or mean and plain, could influence such splendour as ours. Only to be in your arms, blessed by your touch — to die of joy beneath your hands and be newly-created by your kiss — nothing else would matter then!

How good it is to love as I love! — to

To My Beloved

be caught and held by the convulsive
grip of this immense force. I am like
the leaf in the wind; everything is win-
nowed from my soul except this strange,
devastating, burning love.

XXII



N our very first evening here, I drove out alone to the Pyramids. The F —'s thought I was ridiculous, for it was pitch dark. At Mena House they probably thought the same, but there they are accustomed to the whims of travellers. The camel-boy hastily summoned to take me across the short stretch of desert smiled resignedly. In view of the blackness of the night, not to mention the unusually cold wind, it certainly did seem rather absurd, but I had such a longing

To My Beloved

to be alone for the first time with the Sphinx and my thoughts of you; I could not wait.

As the car flashed down the long avenue of *lebbek* trees leading to Mena House, I felt such an intense need of your companionship. It didn't seem *right* that I should be there alone without you. In some past life surely we rode together in the desert? It haunts my thoughts so, the idea of you and I riding on and on over the sand, through the night. We did it once, I feel sure. Oh, my Love, we *must* do it again!

The path across the sand seemed unusually long and rough. Through the darkness the great pyramids of Cheops and Khephren towered, huge and overwhelming. One can never quite get ac-

The Heart Letters of a Woman

customed to the marvel of them, nor dismiss lightly the thought of the brown men who laboured thus mightily five thousand years ago. When we reached the Sphinx, I sent the boy to wait with the camel a little way off. For once, I am thankful to say, there were no Arabs about, so no discordant note was struck by curious spectators, or whining voices pleading "Magnesium wire, ladee? Tell your fortune, ladee?" All was silent and still, and in the midst of the utter peace brooded the unforgettable Sphinx. . . .

I stood in front of her with my arms outstretched, and at once she seemed to know all my passion and pain. I could not see her strange, battered face, only the dimmest outline of her form, but I knew that she knew. Then, with great

To My Beloved

difficulty, I climbed on to her back, and kneeling down, I leaned my head against hers. A little ridge projecting from her head made a roof for me, and there in that queer temple I solemnly prayed.

“O, Great Spirit of All Things, I implore Thee, I beseech Thee, give me my Love! God of the desert and the wind, give him to me! God of the stars and the sky, give him to me! God who made the world so beautiful and wonderful, let me also have a little beauty, a little wonder, a little joy. Thou who knowest my hungry heart, be merciful, O, God! Give me my love! Give me my love! Give me my love!”

With my body bowed on the hard stone, I prayed with all the strength of my soul, with every drop of blood and

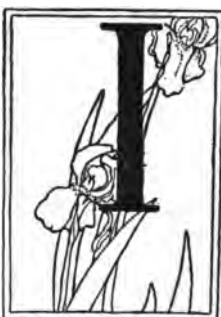
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every quivering nerve. The words went out of me like flames into the darkness, each stabbed my heart as it passed. I have never prayed with such a frenzy of appeal before, and at the end I sank down utterly exhausted yet strangely at peace. Surely God must hear! . . .

Surely!

Oh, mate of my heart, core of my soul,
I cannot live without you!

XXIII



ALWAYS think we owe a great debt to the poets for the help they give us in fighting the battle of life. . . . A line of poetry in times of mental suffering is sometimes like a rope thrown to a drowning man, a torch in the darkness to the lost traveller. A verse that applies to our own case often brings curious comfort, sometimes bridging the abyss between us and hope. I could name many scraps of verse and prose which have put new life in me. Here is one that I find particularly heartwarming, by Max Muller:

To My Beloved

“I must go to her and she expects me. And has Fate brought us together without intention? Am I not to be her comfort? Is she not to be my rest? Life is no mere game: it does not drive two human souls together like two grains of sand in the desert, which the simoon whirls together and then drives apart. The souls which are brought near to us by a kind fate we must hold fast, for they are intended for us and no power can tear them from us if we have courage to live, to struggle and to die for them.”

It would be easy to die for love, I think, and a delight to struggle; it is the living apart, alone, inactive, useless — that is so difficult.

Sometimes I have bought a volume of poems for the sake of a single verse or

The Heart Letters of a Woman

even a line, quoted in some book or paper.
Thus I got a whole set of Francis Thompson to search out the context of

“And thou—what needst with thy tribe’s
black tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?”

The closing phrase is surely the most gorgeous imagery of love ever written, and the rest of the poem is full worthy of it.

The whole verse runs thus:

“Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother;
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother,
And thy mother?
And thou—what needst with thy tribe’s black
tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?”

To My Beloved

All poetry now means you to me: all beauty is just you; and my chief joy in noble phrases and glowing words is because they are all just so many new ways in which to express you, to do fresh honour to you. The pavilion is spread for your shelter, my Love, for your delight, and only you can ever dwell therein. The red pavilion is afire, my Love — burning and burning and burning — the red pavilion of my heart!

Another great favourite of mine I found in an anthology of Elizabethan verse. The poem is by John Donne. He describes the love that finds no sort of bodily expression with the words “a great prince in prison lies.” Do you like that? I think it’s a perfect descrip-

The Heart Letters of a Woman

tion of our situation. A great prince — no, a king! — is in prison now: some day he may be freed. We will release him in the loveliest way in the world; and in our joyful coming together this kingliest one will regain his freedom.

So must pure lovers' souls descend

To affections and to faculties

Which sense may reach and apprehend

Else a great prince in prison lies!

To our bodies turn we there, that so

Weak men on love revealed may look;

Love's mysteries in souls do grow,

But yet the body is his book.

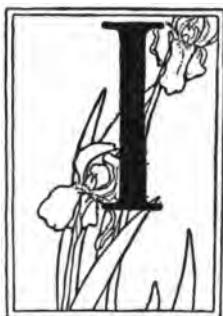
What wonderful care we will take of our released prince, will we not, my Inmost Heart? How devoutly we will guard his shrine from the great enemies of love —

To My Beloved

habit and custom. He shall be ever secret, sacred, delicate and rare. . . .

Good night, sweet Lover, dream of that glad time. I fling my heart at your feet. I bless you and bless you.

XXIV



F thoughts have colour and shape as some people say, the loveliest shades and forms must belong to the thoughts of love. From me to you, then, there is surely a glorious rainbow — the most beautiful of all the glories of the unseen world. Its colours change every minute, for every minute I send a radiant love-thought out to my man.

I should like to see our rainbow. Perhaps at the moment when the soul leaves my body I shall.

To My Beloved

Tonight there is a ball here and I have been dancing with the others, as if I hadn't a care in the world, but at last I have stolen away to talk to you. From my room I can hear the distant waltz refrain—gay, amorous, intoxicating. Masefield has written: "Let no one despise dance music. It is the music that breaks the heart. It is full of lights and scents, the laughter of pretty women and youth's triumph. To the man or woman who has failed in life the sound of such music is bitter." How well he understands — blessed Masefield! And you, too, will understand why I cannot bear the dance music for long, but have to come away to solitude, where I can feel the presence of my Companion.

How many names I have already for
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you, my Inmost Heart! You are my Oasis, my Comforter, my Wind on the Heath. You are to me the Blue Bird whose possession brings happiness, but best of all I like to think of you as my Companion.

In previous lives you were my Companion, I know, the sharer of all my joys and sorrows, and we had a little child who walked between us, the same whose spirit haunts me now, and knocks so piteously at my heart. In future lives you will be my Companion too . . . and the little one will always come to us. He remembers how well we loved him!

I recall two favourite passages of mine from Eastern poets: the one is an ancient proverb, "I went in search of love and lost myself." That is what happened to

To My Beloved

me in past ages. My hungry heart found you, and in you I lost myself for ever. And the other is that beautiful verse from the Song of Songs, "When I found him whom my soul loveth I held him and I would not let him go!"

Dear Companion of my Heart, destiny has been cruel to us in this incarnation, but you are mine through all future lives, mine own Companion, as I am yours. We are one another's best. Hold me, Love, do not let me go.

XXV



VER since I came to Egypt I have been thinking how lovely it would be if you were with me, and here in Luxor everything is so beautiful, my heart cries out to you more than ever. I have just posted you a real letter, entreating you to come, if only for the briefest of flying visits. I won't let myself expect it or even think of it. On the contrary, I'll remind myself hourly of all the reasons why you shouldn't come, why you *can't* come. It was quite a ridiculous idea of

To My Beloved

mine of course, a dream — divine, but impossible.

We were lucky enough to get one of the delightful little bungalows in the hotel garden. They are immensely sought after and as a rule fetch prices to match. We should certainly not have got this one but for George's connection with the D — syndicate. By the way, poor George is ill; that fever, his old enemy, has recurred. Maize is nursing him, and so at present all our gaieties are at a standstill. I don't mind (except for their sakes), I am so happy in the garden with my thoughts of you and the sun.

It is gloriously hot here and the garden gives me greater joy than I ever expected to find anywhere without you. It is full of palms of all shapes and sizes, mostly

The Heart Letters of a Woman

the very tall kind with lovely feathery tops. There are bushy indiarubber trees and the most delightful flowering shrubs, all quite new to me, some with big red waxen flowers, others with blooms like yellow clover, and all around is a perfect wealth of the purple bougainvillea, most temperamental and exotic of all creepers. It riots on fence, post and arbour, even here and there climbing to the top of the tall palms. Until you have seen a palm-tree in the embrace of the bougainvillea in full bloom you have not lived, horticulturally speaking!

And in the middle of all this loveliness is our little bungalow, apart from the hotel, to which of course we go for meals, except breakfast and tea, which the Arab servant brings to us here. It is the

To My Beloved

sweetest little cot — three bedrooms, a bathroom, a tiny salon and a raised verandah, almost a balcony, running all round the building. From this a flight of steps leads into the garden. (There would not be room for you here, you would have to put up at the hotel. But of course there is not the faintest chance of your coming, I know.)

The railing of the verandah is one mass of the bougainvillea, so that our little house is wreathed right round with it, and climbing along the staircase rail is a sort of convolvulus, an exquisite creature with large lavender flowers, striped with pink! There are three glowing beds of colour in the grass opposite our houselet, in which flourish delicious pink and red roses, violas of my favourite

The Heart Letters of a Woman

violet-blue, and mixed verbenas that make me want to shout for joy. And I am sitting on the verandah in my thinnest white clothes and the minimum amount of them, writing the love-book for you, and drinking in the golden glory of the sun.

Now think of all these lovely things, the blaze of the sun, thin white clothes, verbenas, roses, violas — in February, mind, — and all around a perfect riot of the “love-colour” — *my* love-colour, purple — not the love-colour of the Egyptians, which was turquoise-blue.

Doesn’t it tempt you, Lover of mine?
(Of course you’d come if you could,
but I know it’s really impossible.)

And I haven’t told you yet about the poinsettias; actually there are whole beds

To My Beloved

and even hedges of these violent red flowers, one single bloom of which I sometimes buy in Bond Street for two or three shillings, to put in the long glass vase on my black lacquer table. I had forgotten that the poinsettia grows so profusely in Egypt, as it is three years since we were here, and the sight came upon me with a delicious shock.

My letter just caught the mail, you will not get it for five days, so the very earliest I can hear is ten, even if you catch a return post immediately, which is unlikely.

Unless you wire. Oh, I do pray you may be merciful and wire!

But of course you won't, you won't even take my request seriously. You won't realise the mad hope that springs

The Heart Letters of a Woman

up in the heart beneath the blaze of the sun. To you in cold, rainy, probably fog-stricken London, it will seem an absurdity, since there was no question of such a thing when I left; we never even spoke of it!

But I like to think as I dream in the sunshine beneath the palms of what would happen if you *were* to come. There's no harm in just imagining, is there? So let's! . . .

You would arrive by the night train from Cairo, about eight o'clock in the morning. I would be at the station to greet you. I wonder at what unearthly hour I should get up that morning in my fear of being late? Certainly there would be little sleep for me that night, and I should be ludicrously early at the station!

To My Beloved

But the train would come in at last —
such an interesting-looking, clean, white
train it is — and there you'd be. . . .

You! You!

I couldn't speak, lest I should laugh or
cry idiotically, but I'd get a grip on my-
self, and our hands and eyes would meet
and cling, and we would smile — *how* we
would both smile in our joy of re-
union!

You'll be still pale, my Own, terribly
pale and London like — in spite of the
five days at sea — compared to the sun-
bronzed men here. I can see you exactly
now; what happiness it will be for me
to watch you daily getting browner and
browner, right down your dear neck,
right up to your dear hair: what a holi-
day it will be for you!

The Heart Letters of a Woman

(You must come! You *must* come!)

Your first requirement will be food, and lots of it, and you will crave for a bath; one dreams of baths when travelling in Africa. I am no romantic girl that I should expect even the bougainvillea to take precedence of breakfast and bath in the eyes of the hungry and tired all-night traveller. Then when you have been well fed, have bathed and changed to thinner clothes, then you shall see the palms and the purple creeper and all the loveliness, and shall sit with me in my little verandah, worshipping Ra, the Sun-god. We will linger over our joys, my Love, and taste their fullest flavour. Later we will sit on the wide white terrace of the hotel, watching the varied life on road and river below. At Luxor one can sit

To My Beloved

all day doing absolutely nothing but looking around and feeling happy.

(You must come! You *must* come!)

As a crowning joy of our day of reunion we will watch the wondrous sunset on the Nile, and see the god sink to rest over the Libyan hills, where lie the Tombs of the Kings. Surely there can be no sunsets to equal these; I wish I had words to paint them for you; but oh! you must come and see them for yourself.

Lastly we will walk among the palms in the darkness of the garden, enjoying the cool fragrance of the night, as we enjoyed the burning glow of the day. Surely, surely you will have some tenderness for me then?

And that is only *one* day. So far

The Heart Letters of a Woman

three days is the longest period we have spent under the same roof. Think of having lots of days together, and here in Luxor of all the places of the earth!

(You *shall* come!)

Another day we will go to Karnak. Of course you must first see Karnak by moonlight — as all these ancient temples should first be seen — but *not* with all the crowds of tourists that throng there in cabs and hotel omnibuses. No! we will not go until everyone else has returned, till the last possible minute before the keeper of the gate leaves his post. With extra backsheesh we will bribe him to remain longer for us and then together we will slowly pace the avenue of sphinxes, and climb the great pylon from which I have often longed to

To My Beloved

throw myself down. Here we will solemnly curse Cambyses, King of Persia, the Turks and all others who have sought to destroy these greatest wonders of the world.

To walk through the terrific temples of Karnak alone with you by moonlight, this would be even better than my avenue of cedars. In the monster hall of Seti where the towering columns are, you will long for magnificent music — great trumpets, barbaric drums. On the shore of the sacred lake we will stand among the reeds and clasp hands over the great scarab. For thousands of years he has remained undisturbed on the top of his little column, from which he was supposed to guard the sacred lake, and once a year to sail the sacred boat on it un-

The Heart Letters of a Woman

aided. Here we will send up a little prayer for our love-dream.

It will be gorgeous to see Karnak without the crowd, and hallowed by the night. Of course no earthly power could completely silence the ceaseless barking of the native dogs, and doubtless there will be occasional shrill sounds from the Arab village hard by, but they will be softened by distance, and on the whole, all will be quiet and still.

That will be your first visit to Karnak; we must go again and see the sun set there. I have never done this; it must be a wonderful experience.

A vista of joyful days together opens out to me. One morning we will rise very early and start about six o'clock; thus we shall probably keep ahead of the

To My Beloved

crowd all day, a most necessary part of enjoying ancient monuments. Suleiman, prince of donkey-boys, who smiles perpetually and never speaks a single superfluous word, will meet us on the other side of the river with two of the best beasts, and in the exquisite cool of the early morning, we will ride across the plain of ancient Thebes, over the yellow mountains, to the tomb of the Pharaohs — you and I!

We will take no dragoman, for I know it all by heart. Alone I will lead my King, and when we stand in those wonderful halls that the other kings, the mere monarchs of the earth, cut deep, deep into the heart of the hills for their last resting place, I shall whisper to all the spirits of the dead, to the strange

The Heart Letters of a Woman

gods and goddesses painted on the walls: “Here is *the King* — salute him!” I shall say, in the lovely words of Solomon: “This is my Beloved and this is my Friend — he is excellent as the cedars!” I shall say: “He is more lovely than the palm trees, he is like the wells in the desert, like the stars in the darkness, he is as the Nile in flood to the thirsty earth. Look well on him, see his brow and his chin. Is he not a king indeed — my pillar of iron and marble?”

And to the pictures of the goddesses Isis and Hathor, and Queen Hatshepsu with the wicked eyes, in her little temple at Deir-el-Bahari, I shall whisper, “See my lover, is he not fair? See his mad-dening lips and his eyes of ice and fire — had any of you a lover such as mine, O!

To My Beloved

Queens and Goddesses? Is he not beautiful? Do you not long to kneel at his feet?"

And all the little painted goddesses will sigh as we pass out into the sunlight.

Quite soon the sun will begin to burn, and the sky and the earth to give out a fierce glow until the encircling hills seem one vast furnace. It can never be too warm for sun-worshippers like you and me, but the shade of the tombs will be pleasant too as a contrast, a sufficiency of contrast being one of the great secrets of life.

Very quietly we will creep into the tomb of Amenhotep II, for his body is still there. Down the stairs, down the rough sloping path, down more stairs, across a bridge spanning a deep shaft,

The Heart Letters of a Woman

through empty chambers, wonderfully painted with colours that are actually bright and fresh, until at last, arrived in the very heart of the mountain, we look from a low gallery right on to the face of the mighty Pharaoh who died fifteen hundred years before Christ!

He lies in his painted sarcophagus, his arms crossed on his breast. Though black and shrivelled, his face has a strange sort of beauty. His expression is very sad. The full glare of an electric lamp falls upon his head.

They spent all their lives, apparently, in preparing for death, these monarchs of the oldest and most wonderful civilisation the world has ever known. All their arts, their extraordinarily advanced architecture, their painting, their em-

To My Beloved

balming, the secret of which is still unknown to our present day science: all were devoted to preparing for death, the interval between incarnations, as they believed it to be. The most complex rites were performed, the most detailed preparations made, lasting for years. Nothing was forgotten, nothing left undone that could ensure peace for the departed.

And yet we, who would make the sternest protest if an undertaker so much as accidentally disarranged a flower on the breast of our dead, who raise our hats in respect to a passing hearse, and pull down the blinds in our houses — we put *the electric light* over the corpse of the great Pharaoh, and turn him into a spectacle for a tourists' holiday! And Seti I,

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splendid Seti, who built the huge hall of columns at Karnak, he lies under a glass case in the Cairo museum, his anguished expression seeming to protest against the indignity. With him is his son Rameses the Great and many others. Still worse is the case of those other kings whose bodies were not even allowed to remain in their own country, but may be seen any day at the British Museum. Truly we are a nation of Philistines!

You, I know, will look reverently and with uncovered head upon the body of Amenhotep, trying not to think of the crowd from Cook's who will soon rush in, chattering, smoking, asking countless questions of the dragoman who is usually a degree more ignorant than themselves. We will whisper a prayer for the soul of

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the king and hope he has had happy incarnations since.

Another prayer must be said for the three prisoners, mother, father and son, who were slain at the moment of the king's death and embalmed and buried with him, that he might have company on the other side. They lie in a small side chamber, in a pathetic row, three little black, shrivelled people. The mother and son still have most of their hair; *our* hair doesn't last a lifetime, theirs is three thousand four hundred years old! The faces of all are perfect; very patient and resigned they look, but there is pain on all of them, especially the father's. Poor little prisoners! Did they think it an honour to die with a great king? or did they crave for a little

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longer in the sun, a little more time for love and laughter? Poor little mother and father! I know you would have minded less if they had only let your son live. It must have hurt you not to leave the boy behind. We will say more prayers for you than for the king, and still more earnestly we will wish you happier reincarnations.

My pen has run away with me. I have been just living in this glorious vision of the future, and suddenly I wake to remember that it is only a dream. There are no golden days together for us. You are not coming! You would if you could, but of course it is impossible. But with all my heart I shall will you to come. I shall send such passionately

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compelling thoughts to you, such irresistible vibrations that you just won't be able to rest peacefully by day or night. You will simply *have* to get up and overcome difficulties, and write letters, and arrange a "pair" and interview Whips and pray to Ministers, until gradually all the obstacles are vanquished, and three trains and two steamers will rush across continents and seas bearing my Love to me. My own Love!

(Yes, you *shall* come! You *must* come!)

There are so many fascinating places to visit. Another day we will ride to the Tombs of the Queens, and there are still all the Theban temples which I have not yet mentioned, and the cheerful temple of Luxor. We will be photographed there,

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beneath the statue of the great Rameses, like two happy tourists of the deepest dye — what fun! We will float down the Nile. You are getting so brown now, my Love, a real brick-bronze colour. I have never seen you look so young. And your spirits mount higher and higher as the good golden sunlight pours down on you daily. What jokes we will have together, what contests of wit! You love me when I laugh; I have often seen in your eyes that you think I have a pretty laugh; once you said it was like a child's. I will take my fill of laughter in the splendid time that is coming, it will last me through years of my winter life at home.

How you will adore the Nile! I know its magic will at once put a spell on you.

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Another day we will go to the great step-pyramid at Sakkarah — a whole day's journey into the desert. We will take twin donkeys that will never want to leave each other's side, and we'll have a picnic, only you and I, and we'll be madly happy, like two children on a holiday.

And there will be many such days of joy — each day better than the last. Such a holiday we will have, such a time of times, storing up the sunlight in our hearts and brains and bodies.

O, come, Love, come!

O, Love, surely you cannot stay away!

O, Love, I want you so!

XXVI



ESTERDAY you must have got my letter: how slowly the days pass. I wonder if you have written your reply yet?

George is much better, so naturally very cross and trying. Poor dear Maize is rather tired of him and inclined to bully me because for the present I am a free and independent grass-widow. We shall both be very glad when we get him out again. Just at present we are all three rather sorry for ourselves.

Little Mohammed Hassan, who sings

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perpetually, is coming across the grass
waving a small white envelope
surely a telegram. Can it be ?
Oh! if —

You are coming!

You darling! you *are* coming! Actually, yes! it's true. "*Sailing Arundel Castle due Port Said 22nd.*" What an exquisite lyric a seven-word cable can be!

I'm still trembling all over. I cannot realise it yet — the splendour, the utter glory of it.

You and I in Egypt together — and it will all come true, all the lovely times I have been imagining. You're *coming*. O, my Love! O, you dearest and blessed-est of men!

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My Te Deum

You are coming to me — all the stars are singing! You are coming to me — all the flowers break into blossom! You are coming — how wonderful is the world!

Why did I never before realise the beauty of the sky, the splendour of the sun, the passionate joyousness of life? You are coming — my cup of gladness is full, brimming over. You are coming to me, sweet Lover, Sum of my Delight! To me — to ME! I alone of all women receive the King! The stars are my crown: I hold the sun in my arms: all life is at my feet — because you come, O, Deeply-Loved!

What a silly woman I am — absolutely *damned* for love, am I not? I could not

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have written more if you had been coming as my bridegroom, instead of merely to stay a few weeks as a friend. Never mind, it's better to be like me and get the utmost drop of joy out of everything than the other way round, isn't it?

Everyone is pleased. George says, "Now at last, thank God, we can have some auction at nights" (Oh, *can* we?) and Maize says, "Let's meet him in Cairo and stop there where we can get some decent foursomes." Think of the sacrilege — bridge and golf for you and me alone in Egypt! They do not realise, poor dears, that Egypt was simply created for our meeting, that its entire history from the beginning of time has been but a preparation for this — to make a flaming spot in two darkened lives.

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I say nothing, I can only smile and smile, and long to dance and sing with joy. You must undeceive them yourself. They are devoted to you; everyone is. O, you are coming, Love! I *must* dance, I *will!*

(I have!) And now to interview the manager, to engage a suitable apartment for a King, to inspect my array of white shoes, to send all my best thin gowns to be cleaned, all this considerably hindered by having to stop every few minutes and fall on my knees in ecstasies of thanksgiving. Then out to buy long chiffon sun-veils—one white, one purple, one pale blue—and a calendar to mark off the days, not many of them—thank God for that mercy—but each will seem a

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year. I shall not write in my love-book for some weeks now. I am going to live my love instead.

Oh, glorious world! How brave it is to be alive when you love, and your man is coming to you in a land of blazing sunshine.

I hold you in my arms, my lover and king, my master, my little child: you are all to me in one!

I kiss your eyes, I kiss your hands and feet, I kiss your heart, I kiss your lips.

Come quickly, my Beloved, come quickly!

XXVII



OW it is all over, the wonder-time, and oh! how good it has been! — better a thousand fold than I imagined. I feel that God gave us this magic interlude to help me bear my life; no doubt to help you too, though I can never feel that you need help, you are so invincible. Great joy has been harvested up in our hearts against the lean years — joy and sunshine. I feel very rich and very strong, and now that I am at home again I will indeed "try to be good" and to endure without complaining.

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They all seemed pleased to see me at home. The dear children made festival and the trees rustled in gentle benediction. Today the weather is so bright and mild that I am writing this on the seat beneath my great friend, the big chestnut by the lily-pond. The garden is decked in welcoming spring-time hues of freshest green; and actually already — desperate rapture! — there is the faintest pink promise of buds on the lilacs.

Amongst other good resolves I am going to try and be a more joyful mother for my children. Little children flourish best in a home where the parents love deeply, and therefore are a source of perpetual life and joy, ever giving out vibrations of happiness. I have to atone to mine for the great wrong I have done

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them in bringing them into the world undowered with the sole true Right to Life. I must not think of the glorious home I could have created for little love-children with you as lord; I have given way too much to these thoughts. In future I must only strive to pay my heavy debt to the small and dear ones who so need me. Often it will be hard, but now I have so many lovely memories to help me, and when the black hours come I must draw upon my joy-harvest.

The wonder-time passes through my mind, scene after scene in endless pageant — Luxor, Assouan, Cairo, Helouan, the Fayyum — and every moment blessed. I recall with the utmost tenderness the two days at Helouan, whilst Luxor went right into my heart, but perhaps camping

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in the Fayyum at the end was the best of all.

One remembrance stands out supreme, hallowed above the radiance of all the others. I shall never forget one moment of that wonderful night-ride in the desert, on our return journey from the Fayyum. Our hearts were very full that night for the wonder-time was drawing to a close. The next day we would reach Mena House and early the following morning you were leaving for Port Said. The sadness of the parting was already upon us: we were so close together in spirit, thinking the same thoughts, that I was not at all surprised when you drew me quietly out of the tent where the others were deep in cards as usual and said simply, "I have had the camels got ready—

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you would like a ride before turning in?"

Ah, that wonderful ride over the amber sands in the clear moonlight! That wonderful night when at last you opened your heart to me and let me open mine to you!

It is almost too sacred to write about. When I am a very old woman, the memory of it will be vivid in my heart — delicate, clear, deathless. The fragrance, the sweetness of it will never leave me. It will cling to my parting soul, it will revive with my every incarnation. It will stand eternally between me and all that is ugly and evil.

On, and on, and on over the shining sands beneath the stars — how beautiful

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the stars were that night, and all for us!
At last we left the camels to rest and
strolled a little way off, so that we were
absolutely alone. I climbed on to a rock
which raised me a foot or so above you.
With my hand on your shoulder, we
stood side by side listening to the won-
derful song of the desert — and then,
turning, you suddenly put your arms
around me, and leaned your head upon
my breast. . . .

At last!

My lover's head upon my breast! I
had never dreamed of such joy as I knew
then. . . .

All that is tender, all that is holy, all
the deeps of the heart that may not be
uttered are symbolised to mankind in
a woman's breast. And you put your
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head on mine, and crowned my life in that moment.

I kissed your hair. With trembling fingers I stroked your dear head, resting my face on it — how intensely I had longed to do this! Our hearts seemed to stop beating: we dared not breathe. . . .

Then in the darkness I whispered all the longing love-words with which my heart had been in travail for so long. Ah! the relief of that deliverance!

“Sweetheart — Dearest — Deeply-Lovéd! My Darling, I love you so! . . . I love you! I love you! I love you! I love you! My own — my Man!”

I do not know how long we stood thus entranced, but when at last you raised your head with a long, deep sigh, and looked at me — such fires! such wonder-

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ful, white fires were blazing in your eyes!

The heavens opened for me in that moment and I saw the Heart of God in its infinite beauty.

And then in the darkness, once more I knew your long, sweet, subtle kiss.

God is good to let us have been together thus in the desert, in the eastern star-light — your head upon my breast.

How I shall love my breast after this!

For the present I shall write no more in my book of love. It has served its purpose and been my comfort, but I shall not need comforting so much now. That night left me with a talisman. I am armoured now against all my sorrow.

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Your head on my breast has dowered me
with your own strength and courage,
your kisses have healed all my wounds.
I can endure.

Farewell, most Deeply-Loved. Remem-
ber, your foot is on my heart. Tread
gently, lest it bleed.

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